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Horatio Nelson.
When Captain of the Agamemnon.

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NELSON IN ENGLAND: A Domestic Chronicle

By

E. Hallam Moorhouse

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FOREWORD

THERE is little need for a new life of Nelson —this book is no such thing. Instead, it deals with perhaps the one aspect of Nelson's life that has met with neglect from his biographers —the domestic aspect, the years he spent in England. The attempt has been made here to trace all the English allusions in his immense correspondence, to follow him to the places that he knew and visited in the small island where he was born. Such a history of his life is bound to be limited in scope, unillumined by his victories, by his most daring and characteristic actions. Yet in some sort it is hoped that this quiet chronicle may have in it some quality that is necessarily obscured by the "drum and trumpet" history. It is by means of the homely and the everyday that we get at the heart of our hero. In battle he was inspired, in love all his characteristics were exaggerated and emphasised almost to the point of distortion —but there were many quiet years, many peaceful pursuits in Nelson's life when neither battle nor the beloved woman was the principal motive of his existence; when he, like the rest of us, was just living his life from day to day, pleased and grieved by little things.

Burnham Thorpe is a place of pilgrimage for his sake, so too is that last flagship of his in

Portsmouth Harbour. But there are other places which might be remembered and guarded because of Nelson: foremost among these is the Roundwood, near Ipswich. Is it too much to hope that the patriotism of East Anglians, if not of English men and women in general, should make this sole remaining home of Nelson a national possession, and safe from those destructive hands, which in so many cases have wildly pulled down what they can never build up again?

I have received so much help from correspondents who answered my request for local information that it is impossible to thank them all by name, but I am particularly indebted to the Rev. H. M. Eliott-Drake Briscoe, Rector of Burnham Thorpe, for great kindness and assistance, and also for the generous permission to reproduce in facsimile the interesting Nelson letter in his possession; to Mr. Frank Woolnough, Curator of the Ipswich Museum, for help and personal assistance in regard to Nelson's association with Ipswich; to Canon Bruce Payne for similar information with regard to Deal; to Mr. T. O. Lloyd of Warwick; to Miss Anne Nisbet of Gloucester; to Miss H. Vernon; to Mrs. Rideout; to the Rev. James Weller; to Miss Matcham and her publisher Mr. John Lane for permission to quote letters from *The Nelsons of Burnham Thorpe;* to Mrs. Stirling and Mr. John Lane for permission to quote from her life of "Coke of Norfolk"; to Sir Henry Rider Haggard and Messrs. Longmans for the like

kind consent in regard to *A Farmer's Year*; to Mr. Edgcumbe and Mr. John Murray for allowing me to take interesting extracts from *The Diary of Frances Lady Shelley.*

In regard to the illustrations, I am indebted to Earl Nelson for permission to reproduce the picture of the Old Parsonage at Burnham Thorpe; to Lady Llangattock for the portrait of Nelson as a midshipman; to Admiral Sir Wilmot Fawkes for the loan of four old prints; to Mr. Gerard Meynell for five photographs taken specially for this book; to Mr. Frank Keevil of Bath for the photograph of the Nelson bust; to the Curator and Committee of the Norwich Castle Museum for permission to reproduce the Nelson portrait which appears as frontispiece and has never been reproduced before; to Mr. Harvey, Printseller, of St. James's Street, and Mr. Parker, Printseller, of Whitcomb Street, for the loan of several of the old prints which adorn this volume.

To all who have helped me and do not find their help acknowledged in the above list I offer my thanks and my apologies.

CHAPTER I: BURNHAM THORPE.

TWO aspects of Nelson's career—his supreme fame as a seaman and his connection with Lady Hamilton—have so fixed the public gaze, appealing as they do to what are perhaps the strongest sentiments in the human breast, the love of glory and of country and the love of love, that other sides of his life and character have almost dropped into obscurity. But Nelson's nature was at once too rich and too simple to be fully expressed and satisfied even by such a war as that with Napoleon, and such a woman as the "divine Emma." Those are the high lights in his portrait, the objects for which in his later years he openly and avowedly lived—he said in one of his letters to Emma Hamilton, "I have not a thought except on you and the French fleet; all my thoughts, plans, and toils tend to those two objects. Don't laugh at my putting you and the French fleet together, but you cannot be separated." But in spite of this singleness of purpose and simplicity of aim, there are many subtler, finer touches go to make up the picture we call Nelson. Surely the limelight has been cast upon him a little too violently, so that we see

nothing but sea-blue and blood-red, and forget that country-green and the very quietest kind of English life had gone to his making and was part of his soul.

The mythic Nelson, ever brandishing a relentless sword, is not half so lovable a person as the real Nelson, who was happy not only in boarding a Spanish First-Rate but in planting roses in his father's retired garden-plot at Burnham Thorpe, far from all the stirrings of the world. "Variety, the Great Idoll, has no shrine here," as Nelson's father quaintly expressed it in one of his letters. But it was the very lack of variety, the slowness of each quiet day that had so deep, though unconscious, an influence on the eager, passionate temperament of Nelson. Lacking that he would have lacked background, as it were, that balance which underlay the impetuosity all people saw. The rural life, upbringing, and home tradition was always with him—all the glamour of a foreign Court, of adulation such as few men ever receive, of Mediterranean sun and glowing beauty, never really extinguished Burnham Thorpe in his faithful mind. He would remember the time of the Burnham hay-crop or the village fair even amid his chase of the French fleet or on entering into his last battle. It is no idle imagination to be certain that even when he walked that curving balcony —like the stern gallery of one of his own flagships —of Lady Hamilton's wonderful boudoir at the Palazzo Sessa, one end of which looks straight on

Vesuvius and the other on the lovely slopes of Posillipo, with Capri in front, that even with such a matchless scene before his eyes, another picture was not absent from his heart—the memory of a homely landscape, of "the charming, open Lawns, and pure air collected from the large fields of Thorpe, mixed with the fine parts of a clear, purling stream, bordered with Cresses, Thyme and Vervain."

That wild melancholy, the declaration that he envies no man save he of the estate six feet by two, which breaks out frequently in Nelson's later Mediterranean letters, was often enough due to the sense of contrast between Norfolk peace and an untroubled heart and his feverish days at Palermo: no contrast could have been sharper. And in the earlier letters from the Mediterranean, before his troubled star had risen upon him after the battle of the Nile, how constant are his references to that modest dream of his otherwise ambitious life, "a small but neat Cottage"; how amusing to us and yet quite solemnly sincere in him the statement, "I shall follow the plough with much greater satisfaction than viewing all the magnificent scenes in Italy." To him in those earlier and simpler years the prospect of retirement and a country life at Burnham Thorpe was a pleasant one and full of contentment, though it is doubtful if his soaring spirit could really have been happy in a rural life. But how his thoughts turned back to his beginning and early home is

shown in a letter he wrote the year before his death, when he had drunk deep of the cup of glory and most things the world offers were his: "Most probably I shall never see dear, dear Burnham again, but I have a satisfaction in thinking that my bones will probably be laid with my father's in the village that gave me birth."

. . . .

Burnham Thorpe, in Norfolk, the village that gave Nelson birth, is little altered by all the years that have passed over it since the one event that yields it any place in the annals of the world. In 1758, the year that Nelson was born, Burnham Thorpe was an untouched rural stronghold, agricultural in its habits, primitive in its needs. To-day, in a time of much change and obliteration of old customs and old peace, Burnham Thorpe is so little altered that Nelson's eyes would meet with no shock were they to dwell again on these familiar fields. The country he knew is the same; the roads and lanes, with their high tangled hedges, crowded with elder-flower, wild rose, clematis, and poppies, are as he saw them in the summer, and so are the farms with their plough-land and pasture. It is difficult to imagine a place more restful than this corner of rural Norfolk, and it was a kind fortune that gave Nelson his young years in such surroundings, to balance all the stress of war and fierce anxieties which were his later portion, when the very destinies of his country hung upon the inspiration of his actions. His

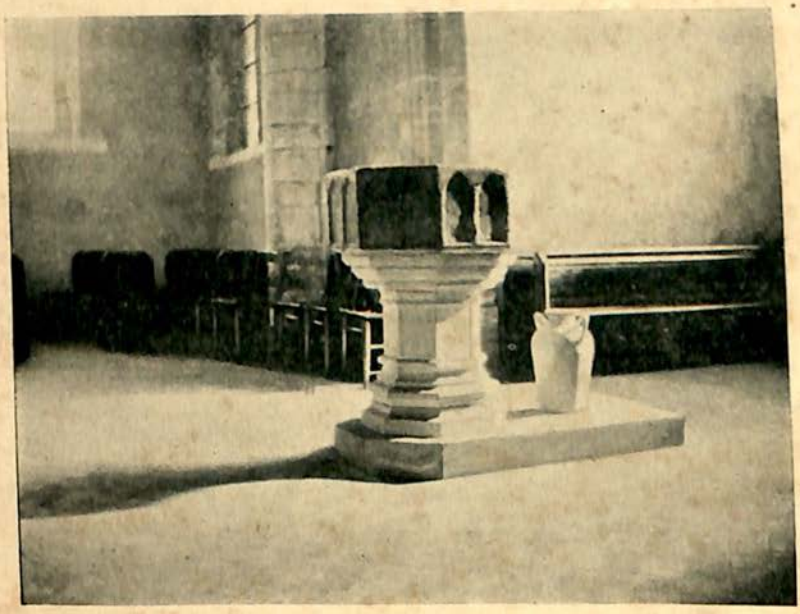
father's church stands as he knew it, save for a certain amount of restoration; at the worn font of Purbeck marble where he was baptised, the children of his village are still christened. In Burnham Thorpe it is easy to see Nelson wandering in its enduring fields and living that homely English life his heart always longed for in later years, when the world had given him fame, but not happiness.

The greatest change and alteration in the Burnham Thorpe of his childhood—one that must be perpetually regretted by all who cherish his memory—was familiar to him, for the old Parsonage House where he was born was pulled down in 1803, two years before his death, and the present Rectory built on a site a little further away from the road. All that now remains of the old Parsonage is a small portion of the wall built into the stables that stand on its site. On his last visit to Burnham, Nelson entered the new Rectory and is said to have remarked that it was "a very commodious residence"—though there can be little doubt that his affectionate heart must have ached for the old house, which was not commodious, which was dark and low-roofed, but which was endeared by many memories and the long ministrations of his gentle white-haired father, who for forty-six years was Rector of Burnham Thorpe.

In the account of his life which Nelson himself wrote for Clarke and M'Arthur, he says quite

definitely that he was born "in the Parsonage-house," which must finally settle the various and conflicting local claims for that honour. One version says that, owing to a fire at the Parsonage, his parents were offered a temporary refuge at a house near by, still standing, the property then and now of Lord Orford, who was a relative of Nelson's mother, and that there he was born. Another legend is quite certain that he was born in a carriage and that his mother was taken into a farmhouse which still exists close to the village inn, called Ivy Farm, and there stayed until she was sufficiently recovered to be taken to the Parsonage, a mile or so away.

To his father and mother the birth of one more infant was not an event unusually auspicious, for already they had had five children, and there was no reason to imagine that the small Horatio was going to make the name of Nelson resound through Europe, when he first saw the light on that late autumn day of 1758. Nelson's father became Rector of Burnham Thorpe in the winter of 1755, and three sons and a daughter had been born to him and his wife Catherine Suckling, a great-niece of Sir Robert Walpole, before they settled down in the Parsonage House. Two of these sons, one of whom was named Horatio, died in babyhood, and they had only Maurice, a child of two and a half years, and Susanna, a baby of barely six months, living when they came to Burnham from Swaffham. The fourth son, William, was born in



ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, BURNHAM THORPE, AND THE FONT AT WHICH NELSON WAS CHRISTENED.

1757, and in the following year the second and immortal Horatio, who was privately baptised on October 6th, and publicly in his father's church on November 15th. After Horatio came three more boys and two girls, of whom the most important in the chronicle of Nelson's home-life is his favourite sister Catherine, the youngest of this large family of eleven.

The low, two-storied Parsonage where most of the children were born and grew no longer stands, as has been said, but pictures of it exist and show it to have had much quaint charm. It appears as if the original house (earlier than Nelson's time) had not been much more than a simple cottage, rather steep-eaved, with a door in the middle, a window on either side, and three plain square windows above. Then an addition was built on at some later date, with two rather unusual dormer windows in the roof. The whole seems to have been roofed with the warm red fluted tiles which to this day cover the cottages and barns of Burnham Thorpe, Burnham Westgate, Burnham Deepdale, and all the seven Burnhams of which the old rhyme runs:

> "London, Bristol, and Coventree,
> And the seven Burnhams by the sea."

Up the steep end of what is presumably the older portion of the old Parsonage climb fruit trees, and in front of the windows is a green stretch of grass. There is an air of old-world comfort and

friendliness about the place, it is a home where children would run in and out and bang the doors and climb through the low windows and trample the flower-beds, without too much reproof. And there was plenty of room for the Nelson children to run about without leaving their father's land, for the Parsonage had thirty acres attached to it, where farming on a small scale, with all the delightful accessories of cows and ducks, chickens and pigs, was carried on, and potatoes, vegetables and fruit grown for family uses. There was a stream and an old wooden pump with a trough in front of it (the iron and part of the wood still surviving) where Horatio and his brothers splashed and played, and there were rolling fields and a wood up the hillside behind the house where young Horatio climbed on a memorable day and first beheld on the horizon the low pale line of the sea—the North Sea, which sweeps round the coast of Norfolk.

Of Nelson's mother little record survives, except the long list of her children. She had been married eighteen years and was only forty-two when she died. She is buried in Burnham Thorpe church, in the chancel, and her plain grey tombstone, with its long Latin inscription, bears at the close the abrupt injunction in English—

> "Let these alone,
> Let no man move these Bones."

There is a portrait of her by Heins, painted some

THE OLD PARSONAGE AT BURNHAM THORPE.

From a sketch by H. Crowe, in the possession of Earl Nelson.

years before her wedding, which shows her simple-looking and grave, with high forehead, candid large eyes, and a mouth which a little recalls her famous son's in its pouting fulness. But it is not an eloquent, mobile face like his—it does not tell us much of her as she lived and moved and ministered to her husband and the little flock that grew about her. She looks a woman of some force of character, and probably was a source of strength to her husband, who all his life seems to have been of a singularly gentle nature, partly caused perhaps by bodily delicacy—but it does not seem that from either parent can Nelson have inherited his fire and impetuosity, another proof that genius is of no parentage, or comes of fusions deeper than we can fathom. Mrs. Nelson's children were most of them so young when they lost her—the baby Catherine would not remember her at all—that the general absence of memory and tradition of their mother among them is not surprising. Horatio was nine years old when she died, old enough to recall her, and that her memory was impressed on his affections, though he so seldom spoke of her, is shown in the tender words he wrote the year before his own death: "The thought of former days brings all my mother to my heart, which shows itself in my eyes." A sudden little flash of his mother comes out when expressing his dislike of the French on one occasion: "Forgive me," he said to his correspondent, "but my mother hated the French."

By this early death of his wife the Reverend Edmund Nelson was left with a large young family to bring up and care for, which he did with so much unselfishness and wisdom that the home circle was never broken by disunion, and even when the children were all grown and out in the world, they turned back in thought and tenderness to the father on whom the benignancy of age seems to have descended early. In one of his delightful letters—he was a great correspondent, and an old-world fragrance and simplicity and pleasure in small things hangs about his letters—he modestly says that there is nothing entertaining or valuable in his society, "except a willingness to make my family comfortable when near me and not unmindfull of me when at a distance, and as it has fallen to my Lott to take upon me the care and affection of double parent, they will Herafter excuse where I have fallen short and the task has been too Hard."

The manner in which he influenced his children is shown by the well-known story of Horatio and his elder brother William setting off to school one snowy winter morning on their ponies and turning back—not unnaturally glad to escape the day's stint of learning—because the snow was so deep they could not well go on. Hearing this, their father said to them, "If that be so, I have of course nothing to say; but I wish you to try again, and I leave it to your honour not to turn back unless necessary." They tried again, and once

more the bigger brother wished to turn back, but the always responsive chord had been struck in the small Horatio's heart and he persisted in going on, saying, "Remember it was left to our honour."

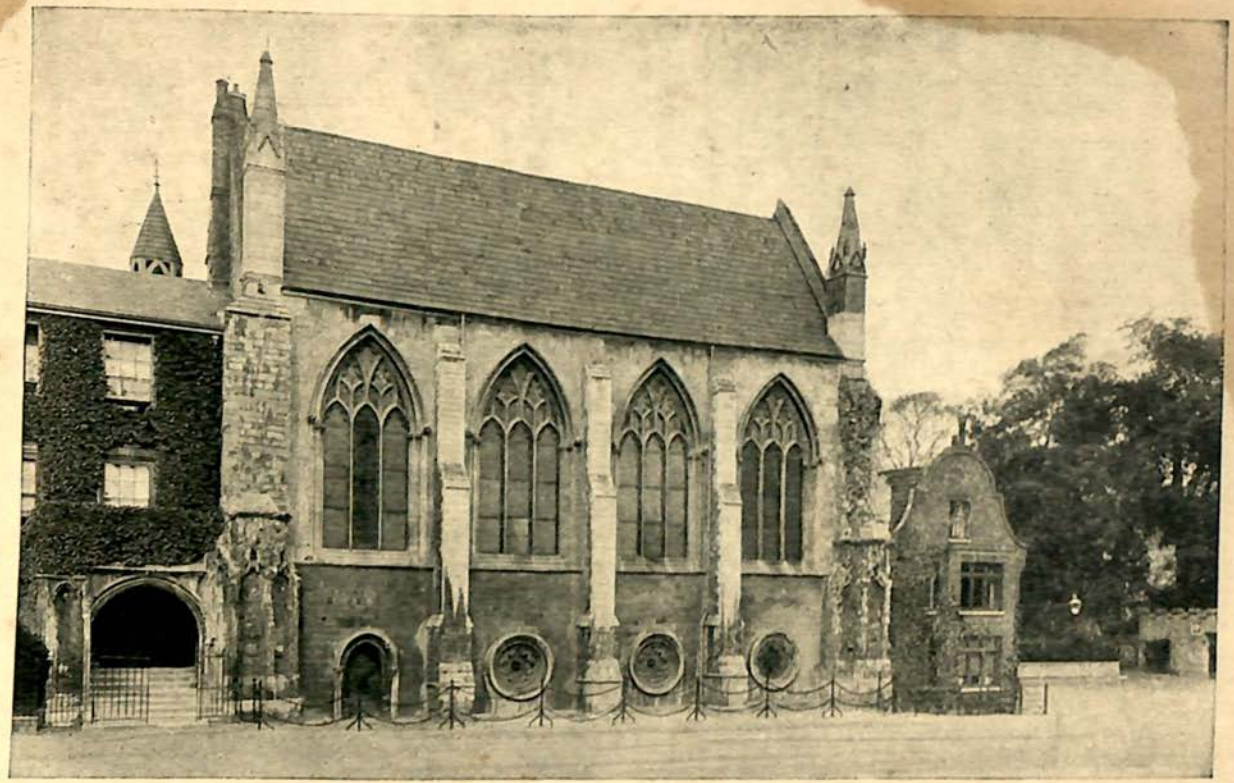
There are other similar stories of Nelson's youth —all emphasising the trait of courage and love of doing what others dared not. When a mere child he strayed from home with a cowherd, both of the boys intent on birds' eggs. His absence alarmed his family, who searched till they at last found him sitting contentedly by the side of a brook too wide for him to cross. His grandmother asked him how it was that hunger and fear had not driven him home? The child made the reply which has been so often quoted as to lose its simple naïvety: "Fear never came near me, grandmamma."

The youthful desire for bird's eggs led to another small remembered episode. Horatio one evening was searching in his father's wood on the hillside —the hillside from which he could behold the ocean—for the nest of a rare bird he believed lived there, but before he had discovered the bird and the nest, his nurse Blackett took him ruthlessly off to bed. But the future conqueror of the Nile was not to be baffled in that way, and in the middle of the night he arose (which required some hardihood at seven years old) and returned to the wood. Perhaps there was a moon to aid his search, for in the morning he was discovered fast asleep beneath the tree that held the nest of his desire.

Another little adventure that shows his nerves were steady was his going to the churchyard—which is fully a mile away from the Rectory—at midnight in winter and bringing back with him, as proof that he had been there, a bough from the yew-tree which stood (and still stands) at the south-western corner of the church. To "dare" him to do a thing was enough, as his school-fellows at North Walsham discovered and turned to their own advantage, when they induced him to slip out from the dormitory and gather the pears from their master's garden which they dared not gather for themselves. Horatio refused to eat the pears he had stolen, saying his only reason for getting them was that "every other boy was afraid." As he truly said of himself in later years, "I know it is my disposition, that difficulties and dangers do but increase my desire of attempting them."

All these little stories are trivial in themselves, but they give us our first indications of the trend of his character, and show his impetuosity and high spirit, his persistence, and the earliest dawnings of that love of glory for its own sake, unaccompanied by mere material rewards, which was so deeply marked in him in later years.

His school education was short. He was first sent to the Royal Grammar School at Norwich, within the precincts and under the very shadow of the beautiful Cathedral. Here learning was imbibed amid aged and dignified surroundings; the very schoolroom where the young Horatio



THE ROYAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL, NORWICH.

struggled with his tasks was originally the chapel of St. John the Evangelist and is a noble building, with a magnificent fifteenth-century door and stone staircase leading to it, through which the boys came reluctantly to lessons, after the manner of their kind, and joyfully rushed forth. A few years after Nelson was a scholar there the City Fathers of Norwich made a set of "Rules, Statutes, and Ordinances" for the government of the Grammar School, and like the Essays of Bacon they are set forth under headings, as

"Of Cleanliness

"Every Scholar shall come decently dressed, and perfectly clean, both as to Person and Cloathes.

"Of Correction

"No scholar shall be corrected, or reproved in an immoderate, or illiberal Manner; and no violent Blows, Kicks, or boisterous Vociferation shall be used, by either Master or Usher, to any of the Scholars on such Occasion."

It is to be hoped the sensitive though courageous Horatio did not suffer from "violent Blows, Kicks," by these humaner rules being made after his time. Anyway his sojourn at Norwich was short, and from there he was removed to Sir William Paston's Grammar School at North Walsham. The school there is a plain, spacious, homely building, situated in a beautiful part of beautiful Norfolk, with winding streams and deep woods and airy spaces of heathland surrounding it. From North Wal-

sham Nelson went to sea at an age when most boys are just settling down to their studies. Traditions of his school-life are necessarily scanty, and the principal memorial he left behind him was a brick with his initials cut in it. About this brick Sir Henry Rider Haggard has an interesting reminiscence in his *Farmer's Year*. In 1881, just after a great gale, he visited North Walsham with his father, who

"Expressed a wish to look over the grammar school, which he had not seen since he was a scholar there as a little boy, some sixty years before. By the wall of the playground grew a line of poplar-trees, which the gale I have spoken of had thrown down, so that they lay upon the wall, whereof all the upper part was destroyed by their weight. Looking at this curious sight brought to my father's mind the recollection that there was a brick in this wall upon which Nelson, who was also a scholar at North Walsham, had cut his initials. He asked those who were showing us over the school about this brick, but no one seemed to know anything of it—indeed, I fancy that since his time the tradition of the thing had died away. But the more he thought of it the more positive he became of its existence, and as he expressed a belief that he could find it, a lantern was brought —for the autumn evening had now closed in—by the light of which he began to search the wall. And there, certainly, he found the brick with the weather-worn initials H. N. cut upon its face.

Curiously enough, although this particular brick was quite uninjured, one of the fallen trees that rested on the wall had ground everything about it to powder. I believe that it has now been taken from its place and is preserved in the schoolhouse."

A reminiscence which goes further back is given in a letter written by Levett Hansom to Lord Nelson in 1802.

"For these many months past," he writes, "I have had it in my mind to show to my acquaintance and friends a letter from you, and thereby to convince them I had once the pleasure of being your schoolfellow, and have now the honour of being considered your friend. In truth, my Lord, we never were otherwise, though not intimate.

"Your Lordship, though in the second class when I was in the first, were five years my junior, or four at least, and at that period of life such a difference in point of age is considerable. I well remember where you sat in the schoolroom. Your station was against the wall, between the parlour door and the chimney: the latter to your right. From 1769 to 1771 we were opposites . . . As a philosopher, I observe, my Lord, with great satisfaction, that your honours have not changed you."

But the honours were yet far off in the North Walsham days, and all his toils and troubles in front of the slight sensitive boy with the indomitable mind. The step which was to lead him to sea sprang from his own initiative, not so much

from any particular passion for the sailor's life, apparently, as from an anxious wish to relieve his father's burdens. When Horatio's mother died in 1767, her brother, Captain Maurice Suckling, had visited the desolate Parsonage, and seeing so large and young a motherless flock, had promised to look after one of the boys and help him to a sea career—but it was evidently not the rather delicate Horatio he had selected in his mind. Some years had gone by, and during the Christmas holidays of 1770 the children were gathered at the Parsonage House at Burnham Thorpe, though their father, owing to the state of his health, was enjoying the milder climate of Bath. On a memorable day Horatio saw in the county newspaper that his uncle, Captain Suckling, had been appointed to the *Raisonable* of 64 guns. At once the resolution which was to have so remarkable an effect upon the destinies of England sprang full-formed into the mind of this lad of twelve. "Do," he said to his brother William, "write to my father at Bath, and tell him I should like to go with Uncle Maurice to sea." At first Edmund Nelson was reluctant to yield to his son's wish, but after some hesitation he wrote to Captain Suckling, who accepted the charge, but protested, "What has poor Horace done, who is so weak, that he above all the rest should be sent to rough it out at sea? But let him come; and the first time we go into action, a cannon-ball may knock off his head, and provide for him at once."

NELSON'S CLASSROOM AT THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL, NORWICH.

But the *Raisonable*, not being ready for sea, Nelson returned to school at North Walsham after the holidays and stayed there till, in the early spring, one cold dark morning, his father's servant came to fetch him away. With his father he made the long journey to London, and was then put in the stage-coach for Chatham, where on his arrival he was left to find his way alone to that ship which was now his only home. His uncle and captain did not arrive till several days later, and had it not been for the kindness of an officer he would have been very forlorn. The reach of the Medway, where the *Raisonable* was moored, looking across the saltings, is somewhat desolate at most times, and must have seemed sadly so to the little home-sick Nelson, pitchforked so suddenly into the conditions of an alien life and with Burnham Thorpe and the comfortable Parsonage and all the cheerful crowd of his brothers and sisters so very far away.

By a curious coincidence this reach of the river where the *Raisonable* was moored is close to the old building slip where Nelson's *Victory* was built, and in the churchyard across the saltings of Frindsbury there is the grave of one of the *Victory's* gunners, who was at Trafalgar and survived it, and whose tombstone is in an almost direct line with the slip where that famous line-of-battle ship was built and launched.

And so, in the same spot on that historic reach of Medway, both Nelson and his memorable flag-ship were launched on their sea-career. But

Norfolk and not Kent claims him, for as it says in Frere's inscription on the Nelson column at Yarmouth: "The soul of fire that inspired that delicate frame, the dauntless daring, the profound skill, as well as the gentle, generous nature and humane heart, developed gradually in the little country parsonage standing by the North Sea side."

CHAPTER II: THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS

THE next decade or more of Nelson's life is purely naval and concerned with his professional duties, with his early steps up the ladder of promotion, and his voyagings in both Arctic and tropic seas. His acquaintance with England during this time was principally confined to her coasts and seaports, with some small experience of London, for as he says himself in the *Sketch of My Life* which he wrote in 1799, "As my ambition was to be a seaman, it was always held out as a reward, that if I attended well to my navigation, I should go in the cutter and decked long-boat, which was attached to the commanding officer's ship at Chatham. Thus by degrees I became a good pilot, for vessels of that description, from Chatham to the Tower of London, down the Swin, and the North Foreland; and confident of myself amongst rocks and sands, which has many times since been of great comfort to me."

His appearance at the time he entered the Navy was a tribute to his native air, for, in spite of some delicacy of constitution, he looked, on the report of one of his superior officers, rather stout and athletic, with a fresh, florid countenance. But

a disorder caught in the Indies so affected him that for a time he lost the use of his limbs, and was reduced to that thinness which ever after characterised his personal appearance. It was only by being brought home to England that his life was saved, and it was on this return voyage, when weak and depressed, that he had the memorable vision he confided in later years to a friend while walking amidst the lovely scenery of Downton Castle, in Herefordshire. The words are well-known, but bear re-quoting:

"I felt impressed," the great Admiral said, recalling his youthful grief, "with an idea that I should never rise in my profession. My mind was staggered with a view of the difficulties I had to surmount, and the little interest I possessed. I could discover no means of reaching the object of my ambition. After a long and gloomy reverie, in which I almost wished myself overboard, a sudden glow of patriotism was kindled within me, and presented my king and country as my patron. My mind exulted in the idea. 'Well then,' I exclaimed, 'I will be a hero, and, confiding in Providence, I will brave every danger.'" From that hour, he declared, a radiant orb was suspended in his mind's eye, which urged him onward to renown.

His first steps towards that renown he so supremely achieved were quite ordinary and usual. He passed his examination for lieutenant in April, 1777, six years after entering the Navy. At the

PORTRAIT OF NELSON AS A MIDSHIPMAN.

In possession of Lady Llangattock.

head of the examining board was seated his uncle, Captain Suckling, now Comptroller of the Navy, who had purposely concealed his relationship from the other captains. Young Nelson at first was somewhat nervous, but soon threw off his confusion and answered so well and ably that he passed with honours. His uncle then admitted the relationship to the board, who asked why they had not been told sooner. "No," said Captain Suckling, "I did not wish the younker to be favoured: I felt convinced that he would pass a good examination; and you see, gentlemen, I have not been disappointed." The next day Nelson was appointed as second lieutenant to the *Lowestoffe* frigate, and thus began his lifelong friendship with Captain William Locker. Almost immediately after he had passed for lieutenant Nelson's father arrived in town to see him, and the new lieutenant wrote from the Navy Office to his brother William that he was now left in the world to shift for himself, "which I hope I shall do, so as to bring credit to myself and friends. Am sorry there is no possibility this time of seeing each other, but I hope that time will come in a few years, when we will spend some merry hours together."

The *Lowestoffe* was fitting out at Sheerness for Jamaica, and in the absence of the first lieutenant Nelson was ordered to the rendezvous for pressed men near the Tower, an unpleasant duty to his always sympathetic nature, which was rendered

doubly trying by his being in a very weak and wretched state of health. It is recorded that while on duty near the Tower one cold night he fainted dead away, and a comrade who was with him had to carry him on his back to the rendezvous, where he was an alarmingly long time in returning to consciousness. Nelson's life contains pictures so poignant and so brilliant that this little one of the young unknown lieutenant fainting from cold and weakness on Tower Hill is generally overlooked.

After three years' service in an arduous climate in the *Lowestoffe*, the *Badger*, the *Hinchinbrook*, and the *Janus*, Nelson's health again broke down, and he was obliged to write in August, 1780, to his friend and Commander-in-Chief, Sir Peter Parker, saying, "the faculty having informed me that I cannot recover in this climate; I am therefore to request that you will be pleased to permit me to go to England for the re-establishment of my health."

Sir Peter and Lady Parker had been very good to Nelson in Jamaica, and when he reached London he was nursed at their house for some time before he was fit to continue his journey to Bath, which in the eighteenth century was the resort of all sufferers. Captain Cornwallis, who had brought him home in the *Lion*, sent an account of his condition to his father and begged him to come up from Burnham Thorpe that he might accompany his son on the tedious progress to

Bath. In 1780 the stage-coaches took three days between London and Bath, for it was not till four years later that John Palmer started the mail-coaches which covered the hundred odd miles in fourteen hours.

Nelson's address at Bath was "Mr. Spry's, Pierrepont Street, Bath," and from there he wrote in January to Captain Locker, telling of his troubles and his progress:

"I must crave your pardon for not having wrote to you before this, but I know you will readily believe the reason was inability; for I have been so ill since I have been here, that I was obliged to be carried to and from bed, with the most excruciating tortures, but, thank God, I am now upon the mending hand. I am physicked three times a day, drink the waters three times, and bathe every other night, besides drinking wine, which I think the worst of all."

Five days later he wrote again to Captain Locker, although admitting that in spite of being much better he was scarcely able to hold his pen. He was longing for a ship, "for as you will suppose I do not set under the hands of a doctor very easy, although I give myself credit this once for having done everything, and taken every medecine that was ordered, that Dr. Woodward, who is my Physician, said he never had a better patient." This doctor seems, even in these early days, to have come under the spell of Nelson's lovable personality, for his fees were so small that Nelson

wished to increase them, whereupon the good doctor said, "Pray, Captain Nelson, allow me to follow what I consider to be my professional duty. Your illness, sir, has been brought on by serving your King and country, and believe me, I love both too well to be able to receive any more."

Nelson had been suffering from a return of that partial paralysis which had before afflicted him, in both cases brought on by the bad climate of the East and West Indies. But the air and waters of Bath and the ministrations of Dr. Woodward enabled him to say with awkward cheerfulness, "Although I have not quite recovered the use of my limbs, yet my inside is a new man."

But how bad he had been is shown by his writing three weeks later, "My health, thank God, is very near perfectly restored; and I have the perfect use of all my limbs, except my left arm, which I can hardly tell what is the matter with it. From the shoulder to my fingers' ends are as if half dead; but the surgeon and Doctors give me hopes it will all go off." Even when he felt he was really recovered he stayed on some weeks longer to avoid the cold, from which he shrank in his weakened state, for Bath "is like Jamaica to any other part of England."

He refers in this same letter to the portrait Rigaud had painted of him, though when and where the sittings had been given is not stated, but at some time before his illness seems probable, for he says, "As to my picture, it will not be the

least like what I am now, that is certain; but you may tell Mr. Rigaud to add beauty to it, and it will be much mended."

This portrait is the earliest satisfactory one we have of Nelson, and therefore of particular interest. It is three-quarter length, and shows him standing, slender and confident, with both hands crossed on the hilt of his sword—possibly that sword which his uncle Captain Suckling had given him with the injunction never to part with it while he had life. Nelson certainly valued this sword very highly, and used it at St. Vincent and Teneriffe, where he lost his arm, as the original owner of the sword, Admiral Walpole, Captain Suckling's godfather, had also lost his in 1711. There is much charm in Nelson's face in this portrait, and his suggestion that Rigaud should "add beauty" to it does not seem particularly needed. His eyes, very level and steady in their gaze from under the wide cocked hat, the sensitive, slightly pouting mouth—all have the unmistakeable Nelson look. Very few people pause to consider how unusual his face was, even in these years when he was so young, unscarred and unsung. In all the long gallery of the English admirals there is no single face like his—especially as he looked in his later years, when portraits and memory make him most familiar.

A little earlier than his references to Rigaud's portrait, his first biographers, Clarke and M'Arthur, had written:

"The personal appearance of Captain Nelson at this period of his life, owing to his delicate health and diminutive figure, was far from expressing the greatness of his intellectual powers. . . . The demeanour of this extraordinary young man was entirely the demeanour of a British seaman; when the energies of his mind were not called forth by some object of duty, or professional interest, he seemed to retire within himself, and to care but little for the refined courtesies of polished life. In his dress he had all the cleanliness of an Englishman, though his manner of wearing it gave him an air of negligence; and yet his general address and conversation, when he wished to please, possessed a charm that was irresistible."

There is a quite unconscious humour in parts of this description, and yet its truth in the main points is sufficiently borne out by other contemporary evidence to make it valuable.

When he had finally fixed his departure from Bath, he wrote to Captain Locker that, as it would be too late on his arrival in London to go out to his uncle at Kentish Town, "I will, if you have a spare bed, and nobody to occupy it, sleep that night, if you will give me leave, at your house." Hearing, however, that his friend was at Sidmonton Place, near Newbury, in Berkshire, staying with Captain Kingsmill, he declared that as he himself would be at Newbury on his journey to town, "I will do myself the pleasure of visiting Sidmonton

Place, according to Captain Kingsmill's very civil invitation."

When he reached London he stayed with his uncle, William Suckling, at Kentish Town, which in 1781 was a pretty rural neighbourhood. But in spite of quiet and country air he had a bad relapse. From Kentish Town he wrote to his brother William, "You will say, Why does not he come into Norfolk? I will tell you: I have entirely lost the use of my left arm, and very near of my left leg and thigh, and am at present under the care of a Mr. Adair, an eminent surgeon in London; but he gives me hopes a few weeks will remove my disorder, when I will certainly come into Norfolk, and spend my time there till I am employed." His thoughtfulness comes out: "When you write to my father do not mention my complaints, for I know it will make him very uneasy, and can do no good."

In spite of his bad health he was industrious in his applications at the Admiralty for a ship, and in August was given the *Albemarle*, a 28-gun frigate. He went down to Woolwich to hoist his Pendant, and wrote with delight to his brother of her beauty. The desire came upon him to have Norfolk men in his ship's company, for he said on one occasion that he always reckoned one Norfolk man as good as two others; and he suggests to William Nelson that some of his papers and other things should be sent to him by some vessel sailing from the little Norfolk port of Wells, which

is about five miles distant from Burnham Thorpe, and that if there were any Norfolk men who would like to go to sea with him they might come that way too. In a later letter he says: "I have got John Oliver, belonging to Wells, and have made him a Quarter-master; he is a very good man." In a postscript he adds, "Compliments to the Wells' Club, and all friends in Norfolk."

Nelson, the young Captain of the *Albemarle* (he was now only twenty-three years old), was very different to the child of thirteen who, ten years earlier, had left the rural seclusion of Burnham Thorpe to embark on his naval career. But in one respect he was quite unchanged, and remained so to the end of his life: his heart was always warm towards his home-county and his enquiries after Norfolk people and Norfolk news are constant and kind.

On January 25, 1782, he wrote to his brother from Deal, the little Kent fishing port which in later years was to have such poignant associations for him in connection with that dearly-loved officer of his, Lieutenant Edward Parker. But on this first occasion of his writing from Deal he seems to have been in a rather bad temper, vexed that he has been called on shore, and had left the letter he had previously written to his brother on board; "but I was determined, as I had half an hour on dry land, to make some use of it" by writing another. He says in his next letter that the Downs station is "a horrid bad one."

Many of his letters at this time are addressed to his brother William, who had entered the Church. Reference to his brother's clerical hopes drew from Nelson the following somewhat curious remarks: "I wish I could congratulate you upon a Rectory instead of a Vicarage: it is rather *awkward* wishing the poor man *dead*, but we all rise by *deaths*. I got my rank by a shot killing a Post-Captain, and I most sincerely hope I shall, when I go, go out of the world the same way; then we go all in the line of our Profession—a *Parson* praying, a Captain fighting."

Of the latter Nelson got little chance during his time in the *Albemarle*, as he was largely employed in convoy duty, but when he was on the North American station he had the good fortune to obtain the favourable attention of Lord Hood, and was transferred to his squadron. In a sense this was the beginning of his brilliant career, for Nelson in a remarkable degree had the quality of attracting the favour of just the men who were most necessary to him. He was able to inspire not only his subordinates but his official superiors with confidence. As a brother captain was later to say to him, "You did just as you pleased in Lord Hood's time, the same in Admiral Hotham's, and now again with Sir John Jervis; it makes no difference to you who is commander-in-chief."

It was at this time that Prince William Henry, then a midshipman in Hood's flagship, saw Nelson for the first time, and described him as "the

merest boy of a captain I ever beheld," wearing "a full-laced uniform: his lank unpowdered hair was tied in a stiff Hessian tail of an extraordinary length; the old-fashioned flaps of his waistcoat added to the general quaintness of his figure." But though the smart midshipman may have criticised Nelson's old-fashioned uniform, he said, like so many others, "there was something irresistibly pleasing in his address and conversation."

The *Albemarle* returned to England, bearing despatches from Lord Hood, whose fleet followed after, in June, 1783. She was paid off, and Captain Nelson remained on half-pay till April of the following year. He went first, after leaving Portsmouth, to lodgings at No. 3, Salisbury Street, Strand; from there he wrote to Captain Locker: "My time, ever since I arrived in town, has been taken up in attempting to get the wages due to my *good fellows*, for various ships they have served in the war." He told Locker that the day before Lord Hood had carried him to St. James's, "where the King was exceedingly attentive," and that he was to go to Windsor to take leave of Prince William Henry. He adds that "London is exceedingly hot: I shall fly to the country as soon as I can settle my little matters."

After his first visit to Court and his first words with that King, George III., who always represented so much to his loyal heart, Nelson went to dine and talk over his impressions with his life-

long friend Alexander Davison at Lincoln's Inn. On arriving, he at once threw off what he called his "iron-bound coat," and begged for a dressing-gown in which to take his ease after the rigidities of Court etiquette, which cannot but have been somewhat alarming to a man so young and so unused to it as he was—no vision of the time when he was to be the idol and the saviour of a foreign Court, and presented with diamonds and dukedoms, disturbed his easeful hour.

His health seems to have given way again, for writing to his brother from Salisbury Street on July 23rd, he says that "last night" he was "agreeably surprised with the company of Mr. Bolton and Maurice"—Maurice being his brother and Mr. Bolton the husband of his elder sister Susanna—"who was so good as to spend an hour with an invalid. A few days, however, I hope will allow me to get out of my room: and as soon as I get a little strength I propose spending a short time in Norfolk."

He was kept in his room for a fortnight, however, and then went first to his uncle's house at Kentish Town, "to breathe a little fresh air." He had received a pressing invitation from a brother officer to stay with him at Caroline Park, near Edinburgh, but declined it, as he had not seen his relations and felt that he must go to Burnham Thorpe. Business and the endeavour to intercede with the Admiralty for a lieutenant in distress about his promotion—generosity and helpfulness

were always strong in him—delayed his departure from London till August 20th, but on that day he wrote a hurried little note to his brother William: "Places were taken in the Lynn diligence this morning for Maurice and me. By the time you get this, most probably we shall be at Burnham."

So Captain Nelson returned to his birthplace and found it altered not at all, except that probably everything looked smaller to his eyes, which had grown used in the interval to wide sea spaces, to the towering canvas of a fleet of battleships, to the broad vistas of Canada and the New World. But probably the most impressive thing about him to his immediate family and the villagers would be that he had been presented to the King, who was so distant and far-off from this corner of rural Norfolk. We can imagine the pride which would fill his gentle father's heart at this distinction, and the half-teasing admiration his sister Catherine, now grown into a pretty and lively young woman, would bestow upon him. Most of his family would be at home, or within reach, for though his eldest sister Susanna had married Thomas Bolton three years before, she was only living at Wells, which is within walking distance of Burnham Thorpe. There was another sister at home besides Catherine, the poor Ann, who was to die in the autumn of that very year at Bath, from a chill caught in coming out of a ball-room immediately after dancing. Of brothers Captain Nelson would also find plenty to welcome

him—Maurice, his eldest brother, who was a clerk in the Navy Office, he had brought down with him; and William, whose character was probably the least amiable and admirable of all the Nelson family—even when a child he always succeeded in getting "the biggest Norfolk dumpling" for his own consumption—had become Rector of Little Brandon. The two remaining brothers, Edmund and Suckling, were not made of the same prosperous stuff as William, and remained more or less at home during their comparatively short lives.

But the heart of Horatio Nelson—or Horace, as he was commonly called in his family circle—was warm to them all, though there is no doubt he had a peculiar fondness for his unassuming eldest brother Maurice and for his sister Catherine, or Kitty as she was more fittingly named, in accordance with her lively nature. But there is no sign of anything but sincere affection in Nelson's considerable correspondence with William, and he never seems to have resented, or even been conscious of, the way in which his clerical brother made use of his influence and generosity in later years.

On this visit the family harmony was entirely undisturbed, for Nelson had not then brought in the alien element in the shape of the wife he was to introduce the next time he came to Burnham Thorpe. As he had the happy faculty, like his father, of interesting himself in small things,

and even when much bigger affairs claimed his mind enjoyed news of his Norfolk neighbours, it may be imagined how he occupied himself in visiting them all, not forgetting his faithful nurse Blackett, and telling them of all the places and people he had seen in "foreign parts." In one of his letters of a later date the Reverend Edmund Nelson had gently hinted that news was welcome in Burnham Thorpe, as "a small party of Recluses are sometimes at a stand for Chatt." But nobody, in either Parsonage or village, would be "at a stand for Chatt" while Captain Nelson was there, even though his deeds at that time did not provide material for world-wide comment.

One of the small happenings of this time in which he would naturally take an interest would be the erection of the new pulpit in his father's church. In the Register, under the date of 1783, is written by the Rev. Edmund Nelson: "The new pulpitt putt up this year. The oak was given by Lord Walpole, and the sawing out of the planks £2 12*s*. All the other expense was solely by Edm. Nelson, Rector, which was near fourty pounds. N.B. The oak grew in this parish." *

From this pulpit Nelson in later years often heard his father preach, and from his hand received the Holy Communion; the chalice, which is still

* This pulpit no longer exists, a more modern one standing in its place, but some of the oak of the old pulpit has been rescued by the present Rector, the Rev. H. Eliott-Drake Briscoe, and made into a very fine chest, which stands in the church.

in use, bearing the date 1663 and the inscription, "For the town of Burnham Thorpe."

Within easy reach of Burnham Thorpe is Holkham Hall, the home in Nelson's time of that great Englishman and princely agriculturalist, Thomas William Coke. There was only four years' difference in age between Coke and Nelson, Coke being the elder, but the difference between their rank and fortunes, at the time Nelson was most at Burnham Thorpe, prevented any intimacy, though they met and knew each other—and in the years after Trafalgar to have known Nelson was naturally a proud boast to "Coke of Norfolk." One of Nelson's amusements during his times on shore was that sport, which the eighteenth century was not sufficiently sensitive to regard as cruel, of coursing. He used constantly to join Mr. Coke's hounds when they were out, though there were times when he found this exercise too much for his weakened frame. "It was not my intention to have gone to the coursing meeting," he wrote on one occasion, "for, to say the truth, I have rarely escaped a wet jacket and a violent cold. Besides, to me, even the ride to the Smee is longer than any pleasure I find in the sport can compensate for."

His prowess in other forms of sport was not remarkable; he was so poor a shot that only once did he succeed in killing a partridge. He had all a sailor's carelessness, and as he always carried his gun ready cocked and shot at random and

excitably, he must have been a somewhat dangerous sporting companion.

Of the first meeting between Coke and Nelson in this same year of 1783, Mrs. Stirling has given a vivid picture in her biography of "Coke of Norfolk":

"One morning, when Coke was seated in his study writing, he was told that Captain Nelson wished to see him, in order to make his declaration for half-pay as a Commander. Nelson, at that time, had just been presented to the King, and was known to Coke only as a creditable young man of very average ability; no premonition crossed Coke's mind that, in the spare, fragile youth of five-and-twenty, who a moment later entered his study, he was welcoming a man whom posterity would acclaim as one of England's greatest heroes. And could any onlooker, knowing that future, have witnessed this interview, it might have seemed incredible that, of the two men before him, any word, any action of the apparently unimportant visitor would be treasured by posterity, while the memory of his host would be all but consigned to oblivion. For at that date, while Coke, although only four years young Nelson's senior, was already acknowledged by his generation as a man of mark and the benefactor of his species, Nelson was still unknown to fame; and thus confronted, the two young men must have presented a curious contrast, in which physically as well as socially, and, apparently, mentally,

Nelson was at a disadvantage. Undersized and insignificant in appearance, weak in health, nervous in temperament and poor in circumstances, he could boast as yet little achieved in the present, and less prospect for the future, save what lay unguessed in his own keen brain and indomitable pluck.

"Yet, little over twenty years later, the chair in which he then sat was looked upon by Coke as one of the most prized possessions amongst all the treasures of Holkham, and a humble turret bedroom which he had occupied as Coke's guest was adorned with his portrait and proudly known as 'Nelson's room.'"

By the beginning of October Nelson was back again in London, at his old lodgings in Salisbury Street, and writing from there to the Admiralty requesting six months' leave of absence to go to France "on my private occasions." His restless mind was suddenly smitten with the desire to learn French, as the Peace left him with nothing particular to do—but the desire is somewhat odd, coupled with his creed, which, as he bluntly put it, was to "hate a Frenchman as you do the Devil." However, to France he went, by way of Canterbury and Dover, and highly disgusted with it did he seem when he got there. Of Marquise he wrote, "Here we were shown into an inn—they called it—I should have called it a pigstye: we were shown into a room with two straw beds, and, with great difficulty, they mustered up clean

sheets; and gave us two pigeons for supper, upon a dirty cloth, and wooden-handled knives"—and he adds with all the emphasis of underlining, "*O what a transition from happy England.*"

Though he contrived to spend some tolerably contented weeks in the English society of St. Omer—where, as he wrote, he was as happy as he could be, separated from his native country—and came perilously near losing his heart to the charming daughter of an English clergyman there, he did not succeed in learning much French and could only say, when he returned, with a somewhat petulant vehemence, "I hate their country and their manners."

It was while he was at St. Omer that his young sister Ann died at Bath. To his brother at Burnham he wrote of this "shocking event": "My surprise and grief upon the occasion are, you will suppose, more to be felt than described. What is to become of poor Kate? Although I am very fond of Mrs. Bolton [his married sister], yet I own I should not like to see Kate fixed in a Wells' society. For God's sake write what you have heard of our Father. I am in astonishment at not having heard from him, or of him by Mr. Suckling. If such an event was to take place, for with his delicate constitution I do not think it unlikely, I shall immediately come to England, and most probably fix in some place that might be most for poor Kitty's advantage. My small income shall always be at her service, and she shall never

want a protector and a sincere friend while I exist."

In January, 1784, Nelson was back in London, and from his letters, written again from Salisbury Street, some account can be gathered of his doings. He declares that his time has been so much engaged "by running at the ring of pleasure, that I have almost neglected all my friends;—for London has so many charms that a man's time is wholly taken up." He had been to see Lord Howe to ask for a ship; he had dined with his friend Hercules Ross; and also with Lord Hood, "who expressed the greatest friendship for me, that his house was always open to me, and that the oftener I came the happier it would make him." But these festivities did not suit him, for he confessed, "I caught a violent cold upon my first arrival in England, which probably I should have got clear of, had I not been fool enough to have danced attendance at St. James's yesterday, where I increased my cold, till it has brought on a fever, so much that I was obliged to send for Dr. Warren." So soon as he had recovered he set out for Bath to see his father, and from there wrote to his brother: "I am happy I can say that our Father never was so well since I can remember; he is grown quite lusty. His cheeks are so much plumped out, that I thought they had been violently swelled when I first saw him, but it is all solid flesh. He gets up to breakfast, eats supper, and never retires till after ten. Keep his mind at

rest, and I do not fear that he will live these many years." He says, "Poor little Kate is learning to ride, that she may be no trouble to us. She is a charming young woman, and possesses a great share of sense." For himself, he proposes returning to the Continent "till autumn, when I shall bring a horse, and stay the winter at Burnham."

Both of these proposals were upset, however, by his being given the command of the *Boreas*, that frigate with which his early name is so much associated. He writes to tell Captain Locker of this appointment from a new London address, 3, Lancaster Court, Strand, and also says he has been suffering from an ague and fever which has "pulled me down most astonishingly." All his life Nelson suffered distressingly from the minor physical ailments: colds, toothache, rheumatism, and, not least, sea-sickness, were his constant plagues, quite apart from the wounds he got in the service of his country. But his spirit surmounted them all, and if in later times he was occasionally petulant and sharp under the stress of his many troubles, it was only occasionally, and the keynote of his nature is given in his words to Lord Hobart: "My heart, my Lord, is warm, my head is firm, but my body is unequal to my wishes. I am visibly shook; but as long as I can hold out I shall never abandon my truly honourable post."

While making his preparations in London for sailing in the *Boreas*, Nelson was occupied with home affairs. His brother William wished to go

with him as chaplain, and did eventually do so—though he gave up the post after a few months and returned to England. Nelson tried to dissuade him, as their father being still at Bath he did not consider it a suitable moment for him to leave Burnham and his duties there. If he would wait till his father was back and settled for the summer he might come, though in any case he ought to "return by the winter, to keep our Father and sister company at the lonesome place." Nelson knew just how "lonesome" it was at Burnham Thorpe in winter, when the snows and the bad roads cut it off from the rest of the world.

Before leaving his native shores on this cruise Nelson, had a little adventure at Portsmouth which might be taken to show the wisdom of sailors leaving horses alone. He writes in a very ruffled state of mind to Captain Locker:

"I was riding a *blackguard* horse that ran away with me at Common, carried me round all the Works into Portsmouth, by the London gates, through the town, out at the gate that leads to Common, where there was a waggon in the road, which is so very narrow, that a horse could barely pass. To save my legs, and perhaps my life, I was obliged to throw myself from the horse, which I did with great agility: but unluckily upon hard stones, which has hurt my back and my leg, but done no other mischief. It was a thousand to one that I had not been killed. To crown all, a young girl was riding with me; her horse ran away with

mine; but most fortunately a gallant young man seized her horse's bridle a moment before I dismounted, and saved her from the destruction which she could not have avoided."

But at last, without any more misadventures to her captain, the *Boreas* sailed from Spithead, and on a hurried note from him to Captain Locker, franked by Captain Kingsmill, the latter wrote: "Nelson's last, I imagine: he sailed to-day. He is a very good young man; and I wish him every enjoyment of life."

CHAPTER III: DEVELOPMENT

WHEN Captain Nelson sailed from Spithead his face was set, unknowing, to a more considerable adventure than any he had left behind him, for it was during this time in the *Boreas* that he was to meet and marry that young widow of eighteen, Mrs. Frances Nisbet. Though this event took place in the West Indies, it had so great an influence on Nelson's later English life that some account must be given of it here.

In view of later events, this marriage can only be regarded as a misfortune. Had his wife possessed a more ardent temperament, been more responsive and enthusiastic, it is probable that Nelson himself would not have strayed so far from the paths of domestic peace. His traditions and upbringing were of the best English kind; the lives and behaviour of his relations suggest the pages of Jane Austen rather than of Richardson, where virtue is so very shining and vice so unutterably black. Nelson did not demand impossible things of his wife—indeed, his later letters to Lady Hamilton in those pathetic final years when he had at last attained a home and child of his own, show how touchingly contented he was with the smallest domestic details, and how eager for news of a cow

or a chicken, or a bit of wire netting, so long as it concerned beloved Merton.

But one thing he did unconsciously demand in his wife—and that was response to his own quick nature and a caressing affection that did not disdain the little things of kisses and praise, for, as his father said of him, "the Tender Passions" were "rooted and twined into *his* constitution." There was something feminine in his temperament that could not exist on a calm and unfrequent assurance of love, but must have daily demonstration. Therefore it was nothing but very bad fortune that led him to offer his name and heart to the one woman who, if he had chosen among a hundred, could least give him what he needed. Nothing can be more eloquent than the fact that his letters to Fanny Nisbet at the time of his courtship are so temperate, she never raised a spark of that fire which was in him. It is the more curious because he was so readily given to idealising—it did not need his later passion for Emma Hamilton to inspire him to extravagance of praise; he had the same quality of enthusiasm to spare for the ships he commanded or for the men who served with him. But at the time of his engagement we have the quite surprising spectacle of Nelson, only twenty-eight years old, declaring he "does not much like the use of that word, called love," and saying "esteem" is the only foundation for married life. It is Nelson speaking blindly and in a dream. As a much older man and of a

much older woman he spoke with another tone and voice.

When announcing his engagement to his uncle, he wrote calmly and pleasantly, "Her personal accomplishments you will suppose *I think* equal to any person's I ever saw; but without vanity her mental accomplishments are superior to most people's of either sex; and we shall come together as two persons most sincerely attached to each other from friendship." To his brother he said, "Every day am I more than ever convinced of the propriety of my choice, and I shall be happy with her." Clarke and M'Arthur declare rather quaintly that "the mild and insinuating manners of this amiable woman attracted the attentions of the enthusiastic Nelson," and the fact that she was young, pretty-looking, and not perhaps very happily situated in the house of her uncle, Mr. Herbert, at Nevis, who though indulgent to her, was of a curious temper, combined with the more important fact that Nelson was then for the first time in a position to marry and support a wife, brought these two together.

It may be imagined that Nelson, with his responsive and susceptible nature, had known "affairs of the heart" before his meeting with Mrs. Nisbet —notably in the case of a "fair Canadian" and the daughter of an English clergyman at St. Omer. But insufficiency of income had prevented any serious approach to matrimony. On March 11th, 1787, Horatio Nelson and Frances Nisbet were

married at Nevis, Prince William Henry, as a mark of friendship to Nelson, giving the bride away. A week or two earlier at Bath, Nelson's favourite sister, Catherine, had entered into her very happy and successful marriage with George Matcham. All promised well for Nelson also at the beginning, and to his old friend Captain Locker he wrote, "I am married to an amiable woman, that far makes amends for everything. Indeed, until I married her, I never knew happiness: and I am morally certain she will continue to make me a happy man for the rest of my days." But how fragile were these certainties when confronted by a real passion—like straws they consumed in flame. To his betrothed and wife Nelson wrote kind, affectionate, and often tender letters. He said pretty things to her, like "What is it to attend on Princes? Let me attend on you, and I am satisfied." He assured her, "You can marry me only from a sincere affection; therefore I ought to make you a good husband, and I hope it will turn out that I shall. You are never absent from my mind in any place or company. I never wished for riches, but to give them to you; and my small share shall be yours to the extreme."

But these two were only matched, not mated, and when the strain came this temperate affection could not survive. A temperate affection was not natural to Nelson—this marriage is the only time in his life when we see Nelson "out of character,"

as it were—and a passionate one was equally unnatural to his wife.

It is almost impossible to win a clear estimate of Frances Nelson's character, because on the whole it was a colourless one. The thin sharp lines of complaint (for which, indeed, she had bitter cause in later years) and a somewhat narrow dignity are what survive most visibly. Her husband in the early days of their marriage speaks of her as "amiable" and "good-tempered," but that was not the aspect that particularly impressed his family when he brought his bride home to live amongst them. We feel that she was the kind of woman Jane Austen would have drawn to perfection; she fitted naturally into a Bath atmosphere, with her accomplishments and elegancies and mild conversation, backed by a keen sense of the advantages and precedence brought her by her husband's later honours and perils. She was quite incapable of doing anything unsuitable, quite incapable of hero-worship or extravagant devotion; and that she and Emma Hamilton should have been brought into such painful contact—each so completely unfitted to understand or forgive the other—is one of the minor ironies of history.

In the late summer of the year of his marriage, 1787, Nelson returned to England with his wife. His familiar ailments seem to have struck him almost as soon as he reached his home shores, for he writes from Portsmouth to Captain Locker: "It is not kind in one's Native air to treat a poor

wanderer, as it has done me since my arrival. The rain and cold at first gave me a sore throat and its accompaniments: the hot weather has given me a slow fever, not absolutely bad enough to keep my bed, yet enough to hinder me from doing anything; and I could not have wrote a letter for the world."

A little later he brought his wife up to town, as the *Boreas*, instead of being paid off, was ordered to be in readiness to sail at a moment's notice. From 10, Great Marlborough Street he wrote to his brother, whom he had evidently asked to look out for a suitable house for him: "I am much obliged about your inquiries at Bodney, but by your description the house seems too large for my purpose. It appears from the size, etc., very cheap, but I can't afford anything answerable to such a situation."

The question of a house was allowed to drop for a time, and Nelson left his wife at an uncle of hers in Cavendish Square when he returned to the Nore, where the *Boreas* was lying seven miles from the land, on the Impress service, and where he, as he declared, was as much separated from his wife as if he were in the East Indies. The *Boreas* was not paid off till December, and there is a story that Nelson was so angry at the treatment he had received in the *Boreas* being turned into a receiving ship for pressed men, combined with the fact that he had met with reprimands and little support during his arduous efforts to stop

contraband trade in the Leeward Islands, that he said to the senior officer in the Medway, "I now rejoice at the *Boreas* being ordered to be paid off, which will release me for ever from an ungrateful Service, as it is my firm and unalterable determination never again to set foot on board a King's ship. Immediately after my arrival in town, I shall wait on the First Lord of the Admiralty, and resign my commission." There is no indication in his letters of the time that he was dissatisfied with the work on which he was engaged, though he had cause for exasperation at the cold official reception of his efforts to stay the robbing of his country in the West Indies. At all times he was peculiarly sensitive to censure, not only when he was unknown, but in the days of his fame. The year after the Nile, when the world was ringing with his praises, he wrote to Earl Spencer, "Do not, my dear Lord, let the Admiralty write harshly to me—my generous soul cannot bear it." The Conqueror of Aboukir is like a child shrinking from a blow.

But if Nelson was quick to feel what he regarded as unjust censure, his generous nature was easily placated by a little kindness. Lord Howe, then at the head of the Admiralty, was happily told by a mutual friend of Nelson's irritation, and at once wrote him a private letter requesting that he would call when he came to town. When the interview took place, the First Lord saw that Nelson's voluntary services in the West Indies had been

both valuable and daring, and to indicate his complete approval offered to present him to the King at the next levée. George III. was again gracious to the young captain, and as loyalty was always a pure and exalted passion in Nelson's breast, his grievance was handsomely healed, and all thought—if he had ever cherished it, which is very doubtful—of quitting an "ungrateful Service" banished.

Thus reconciled to those in authority, Nelson still continued his efforts that his country's just revenues should not be tampered with in the West Indies, and as his papers on this subject were in the hands of the Secretary of the Treasury, George Rose, he determined one morning to call upon that gentleman and see if more could not be done by word of mouth than by writing. Mr. Rose had sufficient discrimination to realise that here was no common cause and no ordinary officer who urged it, and he therefore said, "I am sorry, Captain Nelson, to be at present so much engaged; but to-morrow I will see you, and at any hour you may please to appoint, only pray let it be an early one." Nelson was not to be outdone: "It cannot, sir, be too early for me; six o'clock, if you please."

Therefore at that early hour the following morning Nelson and George Rose—who was to become one of his close friends—met again. "The interesting conversation that ensued," say Clarke and M'Arthur, who, writing as they did so much

nearer Nelson's time than any other of his biographers, are our most valuable recorders in personal details, "lasted from six o'clock until nine: in which, to the utter astonishment of Mr. Rose, Captain Nelson displayed an accurate knowledge of several political subjects, connected with the trade and commerce of his country, that were the least likely to have come under his immediate notice as a naval officer. Mr. Rose begged that he would stay for breakfast; and, on his rising afterwards to take his leave, said: 'I am equally, Sir, convinced of the justice and astonished at the extreme accuracy of all you have said: but allow me to add, that this interview will prove of little public utility, if I am obliged to conceal what I have heard. The only way to make it ultimately useful, would be, if you would allow me, to lay the whole before Mr. Pitt.' No objection was made to so flattering a proposal, and . . . Nelson had the additional satisfaction of finding that the opinions he had delivered were thoroughly approved, and promised to be supported by Mr. Pitt."

So much for Nelson's public matters at this time. His private ones were principally concerned with the education of his little godson, Josiah Nisbet, who in later years was at once to save his life and help in rendering it miserable, and with the choice of a residence for himself and Mrs. Nelson. While in London he was principally at No. 6, Princes Street, Cavendish Square, where

his wife's uncle lived, and at Captain Locker's pleasant home in Kensington. From Cavendish Square he wrote to the Reverend William Nelson in January, 1788, about the stepson who was to be sent to school in Norfolk: "Our little boy shall be at Hilborough on Tuesday or Wednesday next, escorted by Frank [his servant, Frank Lepée], who I have desired to stay two or three days till the child becomes reconciled. I am assured of your and Mrs. Nelson's goodness to him—that is, you will not allow him to do as he pleases: it's mistaken kindness where it happens. I wish him at school to have the same weekly allowance as the other boys, and whatever else may be proper for him. We have been very unwell, and shall go to Bath as soon as I can get out." He sends his "best compliments" to Mrs. William Nelson, for his brother, like himself, had married since they last met, and was now possessed of the baby daughter Charlotte who later became Lady Bridport.

Evidently about this time he had again been thinking of a house, for in a letter to Captain Locker, written from Bath, he says: "Your kind letter I received yesterday, and am much obliged by your kind inquiries about a house. I fear we must at present give up all thoughts of living so near London, for Mrs. Nelson's lungs are so much affected by the smoke of London that I cannot think of placing her in that situation, however desirable. For the next summer I shall be down

in Norfolk, from thence I must look forward. I was rather hurried in getting down here, by Prince William having invited me to Plymouth. I was therefore glad to place Mrs. Nelson here at once, which not only saved me the expense, but the toil, of a journey three hundred miles. I returned from Plymouth three days ago, and found Prince William everything I could wish—respected by all."

To Captain Locker, Nelson again wrote a couple of months later, again from Bath, saying "never was I so well." He and Mrs. Nelson had been staying for the last month with an uncle of hers at Redland, near Bristol, and have "only just returned here, in order to drink the waters another fortnight, after which we are going to Exmouth on a visit for a month; from whence we shall pass through London on our way to Norfolk." But though Bath had suited his health, Nelson was growing weary of the formalities and daily routine, in spite of the company of brother officers: "Our sea folks here are pretty numerous, but I am tired of this place, and long to get into the country."

Into the country he went accordingly, and wrote to Hercules Ross from Exmouth Moor in May, telling him that his letter had found him "in this remote corner, where I have been this last fortnight, enjoying the benefit of a first summer to a West Indian: no bad thing." He goes on: "We shall rest all next Sunday at Bath, in our way to London, and I shall examine the Pump-Room, to see if you and Mrs. Ross are at Bath;

and should that be the case, I will have the satisfaction of taking my old friend by the hand. You have, as well as myself, undergone a great change, since we last met; and I hope, and have been told, are united to an amiable woman, the greatest blessing Heaven can bestow. But in this next, my friend, you have got the start of me. You have given up all the toils and anxieties of business; whilst I must still buffet the waves—in search of what? That thing called Honour, is now, alas! thought of no more. My integrity cannot be mended, I hope; but my fortune, God knows, has grown worse for the Service; so much for serving my Country"—and then follows that well-known and characteristic saying of his, "I have invariably laid down, and followed close, a plan of what ought to be uppermost in the breast of an Officer: that it is much better to serve an ungrateful Country, than to give up his own fame. Posterity will do him justice: a uniform conduct of honour and integrity seldom fails of bringing a man to the goal of Fame at last."

Such was Nelson's simple faith, in which we may discern the upbringing of his good father; but though honour and integrity of the highest order ever marked his own professional actions, they would never have brought him to the "goal of Fame" had they not been accompanied by that daring spirit, that inspired and inspiring mind, that gift of leadership from on high, that contempt

for all but the supremest possible achievement, which marked him out from other men—though few or none had discerned these matchless qualities in him in the year 1788.

CHAPTER IV: RURAL YEARS.

FIVE years of peace and domesticity were to be Nelson's lot before his great destiny descended upon him, before he was "lifted high, Conspicuous object in a Nation's eye," before he knew fame and glory, magnificent toil, magnificently crowned, ambition satisfied, and passion requited—all the things that were so far removed from his father's peaceful home in Norfolk.

The quiet years have little history and that is specially true of this unregarded time in Nelson's life. Our principal and most precious source of information regarding the details of his career and the way he looked at them lies in his abundant correspondence—all his biographers must work upon that base. The store of his letters is rich and quick with the vitality of his spirit, increasingly so as the years go on and he becomes at once more conscious of himself and more impulsive in utterance. But of the five years from 1788 to 1793 when he was on half-pay, and living principally at Burnham Thorpe, he has left but a bare record —for that whole period there are only thirty letters remaining, and half of these letters are of an official and not particularly interesting nature.

In a sense this was unavoidable, for as he was living with his family he had little need to write to them.

When he went into Norfolk he had two new relations to meet, his brother's wife, Mrs. William Nelson, and his sister Catherine's husband, the genial, cultured George Matcham. He had also his own wife to introduce to the family circle. His father had already corresponded with his new daughter-in-law, and that note of complaint which later became so unhappily familiar was early struck. The gentle old Rector wrote of "my Daughter F.N. whom I have just now heard of. She has been unwell and in poor spirits. Hard, she says, is the Lot of a Sailor's wife." As always he was anxious to welcome in his old-world, somewhat tremulous way, the new sons and daughters his own children brought him, but he seems to have had a sudden nervousness about the wife of his favourite son, whom he had not then seen, and somewhat piteously wanted to postpone the introduction of a stranger to "an Infirm and Whimsical old Man," as he called himself. In deference to this wish Captain Nelson visited his father first without his wife. "Your Bro has made me a short visit," he wrote to Catherine Matcham, "I thank God he seems perfectly in Health, Happy and as usuall replete with the most affectionate Love and Good wishes towards His friends . . . he means to visit you, and that Mr. M. and you shall conduct Him and His wife

to Thorpe, where probably they will cast their Anchor for a time."

Catherine and her husband were settled at Barton Hall, near Norwich, a comfortable house with a pleasant park that slopes down to Barton Broad—a house that knew a lavishness of servants and entertainment there was not at the more frugal Parsonage House at Burnham. Such lavishness suited Kitty's warm impulses: she delighted in gathering her family about her and to have her favourite brother "Horace" was the greatest happiness of all. He was staying with her on August 8th, 1788, as the address of one of his letters shows—probably on the projected visit to which his father alludes. It is evident from his own letters that Edmund Nelson—whom we see as a white-haired, gentle, agitated old man, tremulous over trifles, easily put in "a Fuss," sweet-tempered, fond of "chatt from the Ladies" —had asked his son to postpone bringing "his Lady and Suite to Burnham" till his other visits were over. He shrank from the stranger, though he said, "I believe she will form a valuable part of our family connections;" but he longed for the company of Horace, and feeling his own loneliness at the "Thorpe Hermitage" as he did since Catherine's marriage, had begged them both to make their home with him.

And so Nelson came to settle down at Burnham Thorpe, of which, say his first biographers, "he could never speak in absence without being

affected." At first it had been his intention only to make his father a visit, as once more he planned going to France, this time with his wife, to acquire the language, which he had "experienced great inconvenience from not understanding." But he gave up this plan at his father's wish: "His joy at seeing his son was so great that he declared it had given him new life. 'But, Horace,' exclaimed the venerable rector, 'it would have been better that I had not been thus cheered, if I am so soon to be bereaved of you again. Let me, my good son! see you whilst I can: my age and infirmities increase, and I shall not last long.'"

"It is extremely interesting," continue Clarke and M'Arthur, "to contemplate this great man, when thus removed from the busy scenes in which he had borne so distinguished a part, to the remote village of Burnham Thorpe. His mind, though so entirely taken from its proper element and sphere of action, could not remain unoccupied. He was soon, therefore, engaged, and with considerable zeal, in cultivating his father's garden, and in learning to farm the adjoining glebe; but the former was his principal station: he would there often spend the greater part of the day, and dig, as it were, for the sake of being wearied."

His brother-in-law, George Matcham, was an enthusiastic lover of gardening, and he had done much, since his entry into the family, to replenish and adorn the old Parsonage garden. Inspired by this example, Nelson threw himself with his

usual ardour into this peaceful pursuit, and even in the winter found something to do there. We get a glimpse of him thus engaged in a December letter his father wrote to Catherine—and the glimpse is the more vivid from the old-world phrases the Rector always used: "The sun is now at its farthest distance, and we must wait his return for spring entertainment of the rose and hyacinth, and in hopes of these your Brother is often amused in the garden, which Mr. M. has engaged to beautify with some Barton roses. These we will thank him to order hither, that they may be arranged in our Parterre. These matters are New, and your Bro' is happy in the thought of a future crop." He adds, "I wish his Good Wife had her amusement; a little society and an instrument with which she could pass away an hour. Her musicall powers I fancy are beyond the common sort." *

In another letter he says that the Captain's wife finds the Burnham climate less temperate than Nevis, and the mild society of the place does not seem to have been much to her taste. He is constantly distressing himself as to the lack of "variety" she suffers—though it was a large and friendly family circle she had entered—and he says "she does not openly complain": but there are other ways, and it is to be feared Frances Nelson knew them. The note of faint injury thus early clung to her. She was naturally

* *The Nelsons of Burnham Thorpe*, by M. Eyre Matcham (John Lane).

Mrs. HORATIO NELSON.

From a water-colour drawing by G. P. Harding after Edridge.

conventional, an " elegant woman " in the language of her time, and therefore unsuited to a simple rural life, where pleasures come through the seeing eye and contented heart. The little stories of this period of Nelson's life have a curious pathos viewed in the light of his soaring spirit and his wife's limitations: " he would renew the early pastime of his childhood, and with a simplicity that was peculiar to him, when his mind was not employed on the great objects of professional duty, would spend some part of the day amidst the woods, in taking the eggs of different birds, which, as he obtained, he gave to Mrs. Nelson, who always accompanied him." *

One glimpse of Edridge's portrait of Mrs. Nelson shows how much more suited she was to the Pump Room at Bath than to bird's-nesting in Burnham woods. She is the very personification of eighteenth-century propriety, with her high-waisted dress and graceful flower-decked turban. Her features are good; indeed she is distinctly handsome, with her straight nose and large eyes, but her expression is cold and self-contained. She lacks that sweetness and that enthusiasm which were so essentially Nelson's needs.

Of Nelson's pursuits at this period the records are scanty, for the annals of a rural life do not lend themselves to great expansion. Indoors, his pursuits were somewhat limited. " He sometimes employed his time, when his eyes would

* Clarke and M'Arthur.

admit of it, in reading the periodical works of the day, but oftener in studying charts, and in writing, or drawing plans." But as much as possible his occupations were out-of-doors, and he was, as he said himself, completely "retired from the busy scenes of power." The great house of this quiet neighbourhood is Holkham Hall, and soon after Nelson settled down at the Parsonage the centenary of the landing of William of Orange occurred, which event Mr. and Mrs. Coke celebrated with a magnificent festival at Holkham to which the whole countryside was bidden, with many distinguished guests from less rural regions. The Reverend Edmund Nelson and Captain Horatio Nelson and his wife were invited; the Rector declined, partly no doubt from his dislike of large gatherings and partly because, as a Tory, he did not care to join this great Whig celebration. Captain Nelson presented his compliments—in his wife's handwriting—and regretted it was "not in his power to accept their invitation." This somewhat brusque refusal is preserved in the Holkham records.

After his varied and active life at sea a certain bitterness sometimes overtook Nelson in his seclusion. When he had been a year at Burnham he wrote to William Locker: "When we may meet, time must determine; at present, I have no appearance of being called up to London. Not being a man of fortune is a crime which I cannot get over, and therefore none of the Great

care about me. I am now commencing Farmer, not a very large one, you will conceive, but enough for amusement. Shoot I cannot, therefore I have not taken out a license; but notwithstanding the neglect I have met with, I am happy, and now I see the propriety of not having built my hopes on such sandy foundations as the friendships of the Great." The same bitterness shows in a letter he wrote to some one who solicited his help concerning the matter of the contraband trade in the West Indies, against which he had fought so strenuously: "Retired as I am, upwards of one hundred and twenty miles from London, I can render you little if any assistance in getting forward in this business; and good wishes, without something more powerful, are of no avail in this Country. I can only sit down and *think*."

This business was to cause him further trouble, for one day in April, 1790, when he had gone to the fair to buy a pony he was very anxious to possess—apparently forgetting the "*blackguard* horse" that threw him at Portsmouth!—two men appeared at the Parsonage, and finding Captain Nelson was absent served a writ on his wife from the angry American captains, who laid their damages from Nelson's honesty and inflexibility at £20,000. In due course Nelson returned home with his pony, and called for his wife to admire its excellencies, and not until the favoured animal had been properly fed and cared for would he hear a word of what had happened;

when he did so his surprise and distress were great, for as may be imagined, £20,000 was an impossible sum in that simple family. "As Nelson's mind was irritable in the extreme," say his biographers, "and often displayed sudden paroxysms, it may easily be imagined what his sensations were at that moment."

"This affront," he cried, "I did not deserve; but never mind: I'll be trifled with no longer. I will write immediately to the Treasury; and if Government will not support me, I am resolved to leave the country."

But there were people at the Admiralty, as well as Mr. Rose, who had some idea of Nelson's value and of the disinterested character of the services he had rendered in the West Indies, and as official support was promised him the trouble passed over.

Shortly after this, in view of the expected rupture with Spain, Nelson journeyed to London, eager in the hope of employment, and from the Admiralty Office, on May 8th, 1790, he wrote begging for such "employment as their Lordships shall judge most proper." But their Lordships judged it most proper to let Captain Nelson return to Burnham Thorpe, whence he wrote to the Duke of Clarence, "My not being appointed to a Ship is so very mortifying, that I cannot find words to express what I feel on the occasion." It is pathetic, knowing the way in which he took things to heart, to find him writing to the First Lord, the Earl of Chatham: "I am sensible I

have no great interest to recommend me, nor have I had conspicuous opportunities of distinguishing myself: but thus far, without arrogating, I can say, that no opportunity has been passed by; and that I have ever been a zealous Officer."

But the years were not ripe for him; the French Revolution and the Great War were yet dark in the womb of time—Norfolk and peace were to hold him a little longer. It is characteristic of Nelson, always the most human of creatures and never overmuch possessed of "the philosophic mind," thus to fret at peace and home when he had it and to yearn for it with heartbroken longings when war surrounded him on every side. Great as he was, Nelson was never wise—which is one reason he is so lovable. The brain is a cold controller and leads no man to the hearts of his countryman. It was natural enough that he should fret during these Norfolk years when all his stored valour and impulse was breathing in him unsatisfied and unproved—when destiny had as yet given him no "conspicuous opportunities."

Clarke and M'Arthur say: "During this interval of disappointment and mortification, his latent ambition would at times burst forth and despise all restraint. At others, a sudden melancholy seemed to overshadow his noble faculties, and to affect his temper; at those moments the remonstrances of his wife and venerable father alone could calm the tempest of his passions. Then would he patiently resume his wonted rural occu-

pations; and, like other heroes, endeavour by agricultural pursuits to find an object of employment for that energy which he could not subdue."

We feel that this picture of the visible tempest of Nelson's passions is somewhat over-coloured —none of the family's letters allude to these outbreaks. Instead, his father says: "Hor: seems quite reconciled as to any employment"—to the lack of it, that is; and again, to Catherine: "Your Bro: is well and, I hope, fixed at Thorpe, a place He delights in, but I wish it was a little better accommodated to Mrs. N., as a woman who would sometimes choose a little variety."

This year of 1790 brought a few changes and rearrangements in the quiet circle. The Rector decided to give up the Parsonage House to his son Horatio and his wife and live himself in a cottage at Burnham Ulph, close to the church where he had also to conduct a service. The distance of Thorpe Parsonage not only from its own church but from everywhere else was troublesome to him, and he may also have felt, with that tolerant kindliness which marked him, that it was as well young Mrs. Horatio Nelson should be undisputed mistress of a house of her own. In later years he and his daughter-in-law lived a great deal together, and much as he praises her attentions and patience with his "whimsical ways," it is evident that his wishes give way to her convenience.

The scanty correspondence of this time gives

such little rural pictures and employments as may be expected, diversified with occasional visits to London—mostly with the great professional object of being employed on Nelson's part—and visits to and from a considerable circle of relations. All Nelson's married brothers and sisters had children, and they added liveliness and gaiety to the family meetings—though we have it on record that Kitty Bolton, who visited Thorpe that summer, wondered that her mother should send her to " so dull a place." Nelson was always extremely fond of and indulgent to his young nephews and nieces, and that his wife (" by whom I have no children " as he wrote with curt pathos a few years later) looked on them less warmly was one of the causes of estrangement between him and her in time to come.

An annual event was the visit Captain and Mrs. Nelson paid to Lord and Lady Walpole at Wolterton, near Norwich, and we may be sure that in those elegant surroundings Frances Nelson felt herself happy. A kindly little glimpse of the Rector is given by his commission to Mrs. Matcham: " Be so good as to buy for Mrs. Nelson a plain Hansom Bonnett, such as she may wear at Wolterton if need be, or what you would for yourself buy for dining, visits, etc. Send it down and if any covering for the neck by way of a cloak is needfull, add that also. Place them to my account." *

* *The Nelsons of Burnham Thorpe.*

There is a complete blank in Nelson's letters during the year 1791, and it is not till February, 1792, that he comes back into the correspondence with a long letter to his brother William at Hillborough, who had evidently invited him there: "When I go to London," he says, "I may possibly go by Hillborough; but on the other side, I know you are so short of hay, that unless I could buy a little I don't like taking three weeks or a fortnight's keep at least, where it is impossible to replace it."

The death of Lord Orford, to whom the Nelsons were related, had caused some perturbation over the funeral. To his brother, Nelson goes on: "Mr. Suckling had not seen the present Earl of Orford when he wrote to me. The following is an extract of his letter: 'I am sorry so much cause for warmth has been given to your family through the inattention and ignorance of Mr. Dashwood, in omitting the invitation to attend at the funeral of the late Earl of Orford, which it was his duty to have done, having taken upon himself to conduct the same, and you had an indisputable right to expect it.'"

He gives some Burnham gossip and some words about naval affairs, and concludes with saying, "Tycho is very well"—Tycho is probably his pony—"and has afforded me a great deal of amusement. Mrs. Nelson will be obliged to Miss Randall to tell her where honey-water is sold in Norwich."

Next month he carried out his plan and went

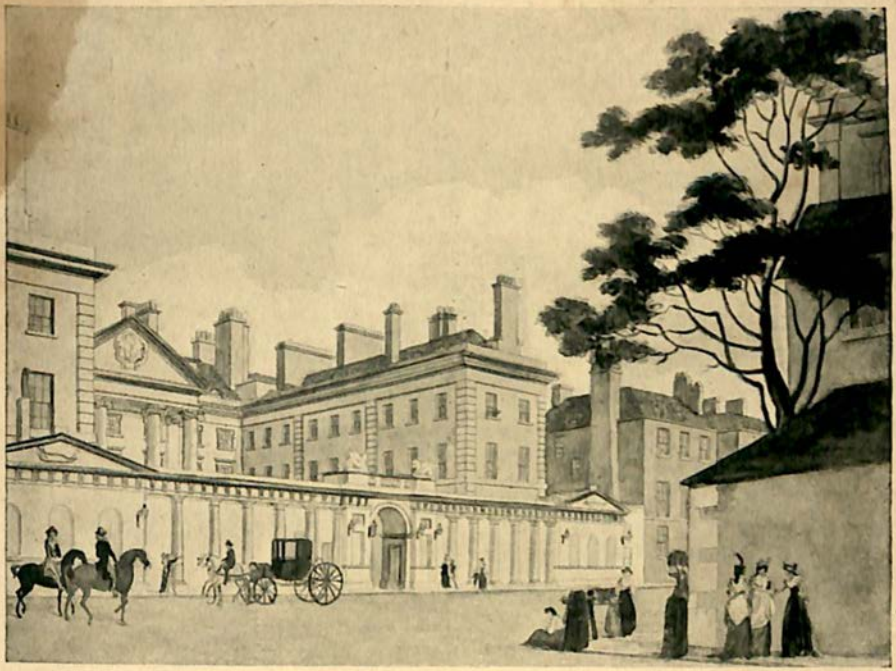
to London, and his father wrote, "His Absence I think an Age." On his return he had a somewhat narrow escape, for the Fakenham stage-coach the night afterwards was overthrown and the passengers much hurt. Nelson's object in visiting London and "Bowing to the High and mighty potentates" was, as always, employment. He is said to have assured an indifferent Admiralty, "If your Lordships should be pleased to appoint me to a cockle boat I shall feel grateful." After his long neglect in high quarters Nelson began to feel as though he would never get employed; he told the Duke of Clarence that though he had written to the First Lord, "I can hardly expect any answer to my letter, which has always been the way I have been treated."

A month later, in December, 1792, Nelson wrote the Duke of Clarence a long and singularly interesting letter which must be quoted almost in full, for it shows him turning from his own disappointments to consider the life of the farm labourer, with which he had been brought into close contact in these rural years, for one of the marked features of English village life then, as now, is the way in which all classes are brought into some sort of intimacy, even if it is only the intimacy of patronage and charity. The squire and the shepherd, the parson and the blacksmith, know each other's names and ways and families. But even in out-of-the-world Burnham Thorpe the restlessness and dissatisfaction that across the Channel was

so soon to burst into the amazing flame of the French Revolution, was manifesting itself in a milder form. In the second paragraph of this letter of Nelson's he says:

"Our Lord Lieutenant has summoned a meeting of the Norfolk Justices on Tuesday next, the 11th; and I have no doubt but they will resolve to do collectively what none of them chose to do individually—to take away the licenses from those public-houses who allow of improper societies meeting at them, and to take up those incendiaries who go from ale-house to ale-house, advising the poor people to pay no taxes, &c. In this neighbourhood, a person of the name of Priestley, a clergyman, has held this language to a circle of ten miles round him; and, a few days past, I asked a Justice of the Peace, 'Why, as such a man's conduct was known, that he was not taken up?' His answer was, 'that no Justice would render himself unpopular at this time, by being singular; for that his life and property were gone, if the mob arose: but that when the Justices all agreed to act in an uniform manner, this man should certainly be taken hold of, if he went on with such conduct.'"

But Nelson's natural sympathy with the oppressed and troubled shows itself as he goes on in his analysis of the labourer's position: "That the poor labourer should have been seduced by promises and hopes of better times, your Royal Highness will not wonder at, when I assure you,



OLD PRINT OF THE ADMIRALTY, WHITEHALL, CIRCA 1800.

that they are really in want of everything to make life comfortable." [Originally his words were, "Hunger is a sharp thorn, and they are not only in want of food sufficient, but of clothes and firing."] "Part of their wants, perhaps, were unavoidable, from the dearness of every article of life; but much has arose from the neglect of the Country Gentlemen, in not making their farmers raise their wages, in some small proportion, as the prices of necessaries increased. The enclosed paper will give your Royal Highness an idea of their situation. It is most favourable; but I have been careful that no Country Gentleman should have it in his power to say, I had pointed out the wants of the poor greater than they really are. Their wages have been raised within these three weeks, pretty generally, one shilling a week: had it been done some time past, they would not have been discontented, for a want of loyalty is not amongst their faults; and many of their superiors, in many instances, might have imitated their conduct with advantage."

The "enclosed paper" shows how much interest Nelson had given to the subject, and he heads it, "An Account of the Earnings and Expenses of a Labourer in Norfolk, with a Wife and Three Children, Supposing that he is not to be One Day Kept from Labour in the Whole Year."

	£	s.	d.
One pair of Man's shoes, 7*s.*, one pair of Women's, 4*s.* 6*d.*, one pair for each of the three Children, 10*s.* 6*d.*, and £1 1*s.* for mending.			
Shoes and Mending	2	3	0
Shirts, two	0	10	0
Breeches or Jacket	0	3	0
Woman's and Children's clothes ..	1	6	0
Soap, 12 lbs.	0	8	10
Candles, 6 lbs.	0	4	0
Coals, one chaldron and a half	1	19	0
House Rent	2	0	0
	8	13	10

The advanced prices.

	£	s.	d.
From Oct. 10th to March 31st, at 9*s.* per week	11	14	0
From March 31st to June 30th, at 8*s.* per week	5	4	0
From June 30th to Aug. 24th, turnip-hoeing and hay-harvest	3	0	0
Harvest	2	2	0
Woman's gleaning	1	1	0
Total earnings	23	1	0

	£	s.	d.
Earnings	23	1	0
Clothes, &c.	8	13	10
For food, five people,	14	7	2

"Not quite twopence a day for each person; and to drink nothing but water, for beer our poor labourers never taste, unless they are tempted, which is too often the case, to go to the Alehouse."

This document seems to throw a new light on Nelson's character, and shows how closely he had studied the poor lot of the men who ploughed and sowed the land, toiling heavily throughout the year for the sum of twenty-three pounds. Nelson's sympathies were ever quick for those who suffered wrong, as he showed practically in the thought he took for his seamen in later years. It was never in his power to do anything for the agricultural labourer, but that he was not neglectful of his needs this paper proves.

The year 1792 closes quietly, with the annual visit to the Walpoles at Wolterton, where Mr. and Mrs. William Nelson were also; with gossipy letters to Catherine, in which Nelson displays his almost feminine interest in matrimonial matters. He thinks it worth a postscript to add on one occasion, "The Martins and Crowes are all single," and seems to be quite dissatisfied with his Burnham acquaintance because "No marriage likely to take place with any of them." He was evidently somewhat inclined to be a match-maker. His letters, both before and after his own marriage, are full of interested inquiries as to who was going to marry whom, and he always reports any little love affairs which come to his knowledge. He probably fell into the habit of taking this interest

in the affairs of his neighbours during these quiet years at Burnham Thorpe, when he was so much surrounded by feminine society and family gossip, and when any little happening was of so much importance in producing a stir in the placid stream of village life. The society of his father, too, would tend to create an interest in these small matters, for we see the gentle white-haired Rector a very connoisseur in "chatt," and turning over every trifling episode with delicate and appreciative fingers, extracting from it the last morsel of enjoyment. Like that other and greater divine, Jeremy Taylor, the Reverend Edmund Nelson might say, in the gentleness and sweetness of his nature: "I sleep, I drink and eat, I read and meditate. I walk in my neighbour's pleasant fields and see the varieties of natural beauty. I delight in all that in which God delights, that is in virtue and wisdom and the whole Creation, and in God Himself. And he that hath so many forms of joy so great, is very much in love with sorrow and peevishness, who loseth all these pleasures to sit down upon his little handful of thorns." In his own way he was a true philosopher, even if of no heroic mould, for while his circumstances and income were so restricted, owing to the expenses of his rather ne'er-do-well sons, Suckling and Edmund, that he could no longer pay his much enjoyed and beneficial visits to "Bladud's Springs," and "Stay at home" had to be his maxim, he yet made the best of his limited pleasures, and

always wrote cheerful and charming letters to his children.

Of these children, Catherine, in the worldly sense, was the most fortunate and prosperous, not only in her kind and indulgent husband—how good George Matcham must have been to live with is shown by his face in a miniature of him possessed by the family, quite apart from other evidences of his delightful personality—but in the comfortable supply of wealth which enabled her to travel about and indulge her tastes so pleasantly. At this time the Matchams had deserted Norfolk, having left Barton and bought an estate at Shepherd's Spring in Hampshire.

The end of quiet years, of half-pay, obscurity, and Burnham Thorpe, was very near with the opening of 1793. For some months, under the threatening aspect of affairs across the Channel, Nelson had been thinking that "very soon every individual will be called forth to show himself," and his professional instinct and all his hidden passion for great deeds naturally told him that his proper way of showing himself was at sea. Napoleon's great wars and England's greater resistance were already rising slowly above the horizon of the future. It was the excesses of the Revolutionary spirit in France, the insolent threats of the Convention, that drove Pitt to prepare for war and opened the gates of his destiny to Nelson. Previous neglect and deafness to his applications were quite forgotten when at last he was offered

a ship, a fine sixty-four. From London, whither he had gone, Nelson wrote to his wife, "After clouds comes sunshine. The Admiralty so smile upon me, that really I am as much surprised as when they frowned." He was back at Burnham a little later, trying to raise men for his ship, the *Agamemnon*: "I have sent out a Lieutenant and four Midshipmen to get men at every sea-port in Norfolk, and to forward them to Lynn and Yarmouth." While he was still at Burnham Thorpe his good father wrote to Catherine that her brother's getting a ship "though wished for, puts us in a little Hurry. Poor Mrs. Nelson will, I hope, bear up with a degree of cheerfullness at the separation from so Kind a Husband, and my own loss of the constant friendly and filiall regard I have experienced, I do feell."

Before he left Burnham this time Nelson gave a feast to the villagers at the Inn, still standing unaltered and known nowadays as the "Lord Nelson." It is set back from the road and faces across the green towards the church. The room in which the rural youth partook of this farewell dinner is somewhat small and dark, with its low ceiling; "like a ship's cabin," as was said, with its painted wood-panelled walls and unusual number of five doors. It has one deep-recessed window, square set, with a deep sill, and from this window Nelson watched with some amusement a small boy named High fighting a bigger one. The cause of the quarrel was that High thought

he should have been invited to the banquet and the older boy told him he was too young—an insult that could only be answered with fists. Pleased at the plucky lad, Nelson declared it was "a right valiant fight," and the name "Valiant" stuck to High for the rest of his life, he not unnaturally feeling that it was a title of honour when it was conferred by Nelson.

At the beginning of February Captain Nelson received notice from the Admiralty that the *Agamemnon* was in readiness to be commissioned, and so he said farewell to his wife and his father, the village where he was born and all his friends, and on the morning of February 4th he left Burnham and set out "in Health and Great Spirits." Several men from the Burnhams joined his ship, for his character was already sufficiently known to make men anxious to serve with him. The sons of three Norfolk gentlemen went with him as midshipmen, one of whom was William Hoste, who was introduced to him by Mr. Coke. He had also with him in the *Agamemnon* his young stepson, Josiah Nisbet, and his servant Frank Lepée. His wife was to stay a few weeks longer at the Parsonage or in the Rector's cottage at Burnham Ulph, and then she was to pay a visit to the William Nelsons at Hillborough, while she looked for comfortable lodgings at Swaffham, where she meant to settle in her husband's absence—it is evident that Burnham, so remote and quiet, had little hold on her,

though she had spent most of her married life there.

On February 11th, 1793, the Great War, which had its root in the French Revolution, broke out. Louis XVI. had been beheaded; in Danton's violent words, typical of the French attitude, "The coalized Kings threaten us; we hurl at their feet, as gage of battle, the Head of a King." The colossal struggle of nations was entering on its earliest phases. From that struggle emerged two names till then unknown, two names that history will never forget, embodying as they do the supremest military and naval genius of the world—Napoleon and Nelson.

CHAPTER V: HOME LETTERS.

THE warlike aspects of Nelson's character and career have been so emphasised that here they may be almost ignored. It is not the frail and valiant figure of the sailor setting forth to turn the tide of battles, defying tradition, ignoring authority, and snatching triumph where others had been content with a moderate success —it is not this indomitable and familiar figure we follow, but the Nelson his family knew and loved, whose thoughts were ever tender to home, and unforgetful even amid the thunderous years of the Great War.

To us history is always in the past, a majestic muse, concerned with nothing less than the fall of kingdoms and the destinies of battle. We feel that our ancestors lived under the shadow of her wings and had no thoughts or fears save for these national events. The histories of England during the long struggle with France give an unrelieved impression of strain and effort, battles lost or won the sole concern of the whole population. But the annals of the Nelson family show how very false and partial is that impression. It is the quietness of these chronicles of the years of the Great War, written by the very family that

had borne the hero of that war, which stand out. Once more we realise that strange, unchanging stillness of the English countryside which remains unshaken and unaltered by all the tumult of the world. In historic retrospect the battles of St. Vincent or the Nile are seen as so tremendous that it is difficult to realise how naturally they came to the family most intimately concerned; how the great things that history proclaims were mingled with the little things that only a woman remembers.

At the time he commissioned the *Agamemnon* we see Nelson in the early maturity of his powers, full of life and hope and that high confidence in himself which sprang from secret sources as yet unknown to the world. He was happy in his home life—for it was not till he knew Emma Hamilton that he realised his wife's deficiencies and his own passionate needs—with an unblemished name and a temper unfretted by all the suffering his wounds brought him, exercising for the first time his wonderful gift of inspiring men and welding them to his wishes. It was very simple, this gift; it was only that he loved and believed in them and showed that he did so with an impulsiveness which disdained cold caution. As a naval officer, as a leader of men, he first becomes completely himself on the quarter-deck of the *Agamemnon*; she is one of his beloved ships, though she took no part in his four great battles. So soon as he was appointed he wrote to his

BOARD ROOM AT THE ADMIRALTY.

From an Aquatint after Pugin and Rowlandson.

brother from Chatham, "I have the pleasure of telling you that my Ship is, without exception, the finest 64 in the service, and has the character of sailing most remarkably well." A little later, when at Spithead, he said, "We are all well: indeed, nobody can be ill with my Ship's company, they are so fine a set." To have been with him in the old *Agamemnon* was ever afterwards to be assured of his goodwill.

It was in the *Agamemnon* that he first sailed into the Bay of Naples, having left the blockade before Toulon, at Lord Hood's orders, on the eve of the surrender of the French arsenal and dockyard. "I should have liked," he told his wife, "to have stayed a day longer with the fleet, when they entered the harbour, but service could not be neglected for any private gratification." It was on this visit to Naples that he first met Lady Hamilton, though he was too much taken up with war and affairs to give any special thought to her. He told his wife with cool indifference, "She is a young woman of amiable manners, and who does honour to the station to which she is raised." To his wife at about this same time he had written: "How I long to have a letter from you: next to being with you, it is the greatest pleasure I can receive. The being united to such a good woman, I look back to as the happiest period of my life; and as I cannot here show my affection to you, I do it doubly to Josiah, who deserves it, as well on his own account as on yours, for he is

a real good boy, and most affectionately loves me."

How much the private thoughts of "our dear, distant, Navall Friend," as his father quaintly calls him, turned homewards, is shown by his saying in a letter to this same father, "I consider you now as at high harvest, and hope you have good weather and good crops." How different those peaceful fields of Burnham to his own situation before Toulon, before a France where, as he says, "there are now only two descriptions of people . . . the one drunk and mad; the other, with horror painted in their faces, are absolutely starving; yet nothing brings them to their senses." By very emphasis of contrast his father's letters must have had a special value when read amid such scenes. Such a letter as this, for instance: "Every mark of my affection you may justly expect; and it gives me satisfaction to reflect on the many proofs I have had of your disposition to observe those duties which each relation in life calls for. The approbation of your own mind is far more pleasing than any supposed partiality of mine; though a reward infinitely short of what moral virtue, which is an attendant on true Religion, shall one day receive. —The principal domestic occurrence at this juncture is that of your brother's ordination [Suckling]. Thus far, thank God, our design is accomplished: all proceeds favourably, and there is good hope he may prove a worthy member of society. Farm-

ing goes on well; and at Christmas I look forward for the auditing my accounts to your own person; *Agamemnon* and her crew being either honourably discharged, or laid up for the winter in safety. O England! blessed art thou among the Isles, for thy internal prosperity. In peace and plenty may thy counsellors preserve thee. . . .As to myself, the material machine keeps pretty nearly the same periodical movement; the repairs must be by a very nice delicate touch, and my mind is so fortified as to meet all common events with calmness: ever steady to my position, that the good of every man's life preponderates over the evil. God bless you."

Amidst all the excitements of the surrender and later evacuation of Toulon, Nelson never ceased to take the closest interest in his home affairs, though he seems to have been a little vexed on hearing that his wife "was not perfectly well" owing to an anxiety which was very natural. "Why should you alarm yourself?" he asks her, "I am well, your son is well, and we are as comfortable in every respect as the nature of our service will admit." But amid the dreadfulness of the Toulon evacuation he writes to her more feelingly: "Everything which domestic wars produce usually, is multiplied at Toulon. Fathers are here without their families, families without their fathers. In short, all is horror. . . . I cannot write all: my mind is deeply impressed with grief. Each teller makes the scene more horrible." But

even so, small things cheer him, as they always have cheered humanity: "I am glad to hear my mare is not sold"; or, to his wife, "Hoste is indeed a most exceeding good boy, and will shine in our Service. We shall talk these matters over again in a winter's evening."

This was the young William Hoste, son of the Reverend Dixon Hoste, of Godwick Hall, near Rougham, who had been introduced to him by Thomas William Coke. Nelson was very fond of the boy who so amply fulfilled his prophecy and became an ornament to the naval service. To the boy's father, in February, 1794, Nelson wrote the following letter—how quick was his pen in the "noble pleasure of praising" his published correspondence proves—"You cannot receive much more pleasure in reading this letter than I have in writing it, to say, that your Son is everything which his dearest friends can wish him to be; and is a strong proof that the greatest gallantry may lie under the most gentle behaviour. Two days ago it was necessary to take a small Vessel from a number of people who had got on shore to prevent us. She was carried in high style, and your good Son was by my side." A few months later he again wrote from the camp at Bastia to Hoste's father about the boy, who, he says, "highly deserves everything I can do to make him happy. Do not spoil him by giving him too much money; he has all that he wishes—sometimes more. I love him; therefore shall say no more

on that subject." Towards the end of the same letter he adds, "Your dear boy wished much to come ashore with me, and if I had not thought the danger was too great, I should have brought him. However, he has been several times to see me."

Nelson commonly called his midshipmen and sometimes his junior officers his "children," and on some of them, as Hoste, and Edward Parker, of whom he said in his poignant way, "He is my child, for I found him in distress," he lavished a most tender love—a love out of all proportion, as it would seem to colder natures; a love which wrung his heart and left him ill and broken if any harm befell these young men he cherished. For that strange power of loving which was in him, which gave him his almost magnetic influence over others, Nelson paid heavily in suffering. Viewed in one aspect his later life, from the Nile to his death, is one tragedy of giving and craving love: he gave his heart to a woman, to his child, to some of his officers; he gave his life to his country. Whatever his failings, he was like the heroes of Thucydides: "Their bodies they devote to their country, as though they belonged to other men; their true self is their mind which is most truly their own when employed in her service."

Separation from his wife at this time of 1794 seems to have produced more ardour towards her than was quite usual with him. In one letter

he says: "I need not, I am certain, say, that all my joy is placed in you, I have none separated from you; you are present to my imagination be where I will. I am convinced you feel interested in every action of my life; and my exultation in victory is two-fold, knowing that you partake of it. Only recollect that a brave man dies but once, a coward all his life long. We cannot escape death; and should it happen to me in this place, remember it is the will of Him, in whose hands are the issues of life and death."

But unshrinkingly as he always faced the chances of death he had his natural home-plans like other men, even in the midst of war. To his brother William he wrote, "I feel myself very much obliged by your offer about the farm, but don't think I shall make prize-money enough to purchase an estate; and if I do, must look out for a house and grounds in some measure ready made. It is too late for me to begin. I assure you and Mrs. Nelson I feel myself very much obliged by your attention to my Mrs. Nelson." He says that "all your Hillborough and Swaffham news" is more interesting to him than that given in the public prints. In September he tells his wife: "I expect to see you in the fall of the year; and although I shall not bring with me either riches or honours, yet I flatter myself I shall bring an unblemished character. It always rejoices me to hear that you are comfortable, and that my friends are attentive to you. I hope we shall find some

snug cottage, whenever we may be obliged to quit the Parsonage."

Two months earlier than this letter Nelson had practically lost the sight of his right eye at the siege of Calvi, though he did not inform his wife of the fact till some weeks afterwards: "As it is all past, I may tell you, that on the 10th of July, a shot having hit our battery, the splinters and stones from it struck me with great violence in the face and breast. Although the blow was so severe as to occasion a great flow of blood from my head, yet I most fortunately escaped, having only my right eye nearly deprived of its sight: it was cut down, but is so far recovered, as for me to be able to distinguish light from darkness. As to all the purposes of use, it is gone; however, the blemish is nothing, not to be perceived, unless told. The pupil is nearly the size of the blue part, I don't know the name."

His father wrote to him on hearing of this loss. "It is well known that the predestinarian doctrine is among the creeds of military men," he began in his solemn, old-world way; "it may sometimes be useful; yet it must not exclude the confidence Christianity preaches of a particular Providence, which directs all events. It was an unerring power, wise and good, which diminished the force of the blow by which your eye was lost; and we thank the hand that spared you, spared you for future good, for example, and instruction in many subsequent years. There is no fear that flattery

can come from me; but I sometimes wipe away the tear of joy, at hearing your character in every point of view so well spoken of. . . .Your lot is cast, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord: the very hairs of your head are numbered —a most comfortable doctrine."

The letter his wife must have written on this occasion has not apparently been preserved, but it is doubtful if she would find the "comfortable doctrine" so sustaining as the peaceful and truly pious old man, her father-in-law. Nelson, finding that his hopes of returning home in the autumn would not be fulfilled, hopes that she "will spend the winter cheerfully. The Wolterton family, I am sure, will be happy to receive you for as long a time as you please. Do not repine at my absence; before spring I hope we shall have peace, when we must look out for some little cottage: I assure you I shall return to the plough with redoubled glee."

With his warm heart and feeling Nelson did not neglect to do something to make the winter more comfortable to the poor of his native village. For this purpose he sent his father a gift of money, which the Rector acknowledged from Bath, where, now that his affairs were a little more prosperous, he always refuged from the cold: "I have received your letter with those contents, which are expressive of a benevolent and truly Christian heart; and I have endeavoured to distribute your Christmas gift in the best manner I could think of,

chiefly in a little warm clothing to the widows and orphans, and very old men: Blessed is the man who considereth the poor and needy. He, who has been marvellously your shield, will still, I hope, and pray, be your protector. Before I see Burnham, I must shake hands with the *Agamemnon's* Captain, Horatio Nelson, whose friendship, as well as affection, I can rely upon."

Another year was to go by, that of 1795, and find at its close events repeating themselves—Nelson still at sea and the Rector at Bath, writing to him: "In days of peace, you will, I hope, enjoy your cottage. Agreeably to your wishes, we have taken a small house here for three years: the sun must return upon us before I can revisit Burnham."

In a professional sense, this year was memorable for Hotham's engagement with the French fleet, in which Nelson took so distinguished and daring a part, foreshadowing his deeds to follow. As he said to his wife, "Sure I am, had I commanded our Fleet on the 14th, that either the whole French Fleet would have graced my triumph, or I should have been in a confounded scrape." He told her how he went on board the flagship and begged the Admiral to follow the enemy, "But he, much cooler than myself, said, 'We must be contented, we have done very well.' Now, had we taken ten Sail, and had allowed the eleventh to escape, when it had been possible to have got at her, I could never have called it well done."

There speaks Nelson in his authentic and unmistakable voice—that is the accent of the Nile and the Baltic. Already he is prepared and fit for his destiny. But there are frequent signs during 1795 that he is tired of an unsatisfactory war and turning to thoughts of home and rural life, and his ambitions never seem to soar beyond the "very small cottage" where "I shall be as happy as in a house as large as Holkham." He writes: "Fame says I am likely to be an Admiral; I hope not," and declares "I shall return again to the farm with no small degree of satisfaction: it is the happiest of lives if people will but be contented." Again, "When I get through this campaign, I think myself I ought to rest. I hope to God the war will be over, and that I may return to you in peace and quietness. A little farm, and my good name, form all my wants and wishes." A year later the longing is still on him, "Happy, happy shall I be to return to a little but neat cottage," he tells his wife, and repeats the same remark to his father when sending him money for the Burnham poor. "Last year, from various causes, I missed the opportunity of sending something to the poor. I send it in time this year, and at the proper time you will dispose of it." Many other statements of the kind may be found in his letters at this time—the "neat cottage" and the "plough" had become almost a formula with him, to be used at any time he felt weary or discontented with the Naval Service. It was no wonder

if he longed for Norfolk after three years' absence, when he had gone through so much arduous and unrewarded toil and danger, for as he said, "God knows, instead of riches, my little fortune has been diminished in the Service."

But 1796 was a memorable year, and brought about a change in Nelson's desire to go home, for Jervis had become Commander-in-Chief, and in him Nelson met a kindred spirit, responsive to his mind. It was under Jervis's command—actually in the first case, technically in the second—that Nelson achieved his first two outstanding successes. The sympathy that sprang up between the somewhat harsh Admiral and his daring subordinate was a curious one, considering their temperaments, but very fortunate for England. Jervis was a just man, but he could be most forbidding: Nelson was generous, but he often took violent dislikes. Had either of them been repelled by the other—and it would not have been surprising had Jervis in particular failed to understand the passionate, impetuous, unorthodox little Captain of the *Agamemnon*—it would have been a real misfortune. But, instead, for Nelson Jervis laid aside his character of martinet and disciplinarian and showed him a tenderness even that he displayed to no other. Nelson's affectionate response was quick and warm: "We look up to you," he told him, "as we have always found you, as to our Father, under whose fostering care we have been led to fame." Few things are more striking in our

naval history than the conjunction of these two seamen; for just where Jervis could not go Nelson stepped in—they dovetailed into each other's needs and deficiencies. With Jervis was authority and influence, a supreme aptitude for organisation and control, but he was lacking in tactical insight. With Nelson was genius and all its difficult accompaniments; he needed the official backing and encouragement and understanding which it was in his Chief's power to give—and to his eternal credit Jervis did give it generously.

It was the year after he came under Jervis's command that the unfolding genius of Nelson received its first great opportunity and embraced that "happy moment" which, as he said, now and then offers. He had that quality of mental daring which is essential to leadership: as a captain he risked his ship, as an admiral he risked his fleet, to win victory; and that the disaster which would have befallen miscalculation of chances never touched his triumphs, is proof sufficient of his inspiration. Up to the battle off Cape St. Vincent on February 14th, 1797, England knew not Nelson; he had distinguished himself in many minor engagements, he had displayed indefatigable energy, resource and courage, but as all these actions and sieges of his took place abroad the English people had not yet realised him, though he was beginning to be known in the Navy.

Then came the morning of St. Valentine's Day, and the Spanish Fleet looming up through the fog

in a long, irregular line. Jervis had fifteen ships against the Spaniards' twenty-seven, but one of those fifteen was the *Captain* and Horatio Nelson walked her quarter-deck. Before night fell Nelson had, with supreme daring and success, repaired a tactical blunder of Jervis's, and unauthorised and alone flung his ship in the very path of the Spanish retreat, thus turning what promised to be a moderate engagement into a decisive victory. He had, moreover, with the picturesque valour that always attended him, boarded and taken single-handed two Spanish first-rates. Thus in one day Nelson unfurled his bright challenge to fame, which ever after attended him. He was marked as the Man of Destiny his country so sorely needed.

Happily we have record of how the news of his honour and valour was received by the two nearest to him, his father and his wife. To the tremulous old man, who was so easily "put in a Fuss" by trifles, it may easily be conceived the event was almost too much. It was only his religious sense upheld him in this joy, as it would have upheld him in sorrow. From Bath he wrote to his heroic son: "I thank my God with all the power of a grateful soul, for the mercies He has most graciously bestowed on me, in preserving you amidst the imminent perils which so lately threatened your life at every moment; and, amongst other innumerable blessings, I must not forget the bounty of Heaven in granting you a mind that rejoices in the practice of those eminent

virtues which form great and good characters. Not only my few acquaintances here, but the people in general met me at every corner with such handsome words, that I was obliged to retire from the public eye. A wise Moralist has observed, that even bliss can rise but to a certain pitch; and this has been verified in me. The height of glory to which your professional judgment, united with a proper degree of bravery, guarded by Providence, has raised you, few sons, my dear child, attain to, and fewer fathers live to see. Tears of joy have involuntarily trickled down my furrowed cheek. Who could stand the force of such general congratulation? The name and services of Nelson have sounded throughout the City of Bath, from the common ballad-singer to the public theatre. Joy sparkles in every eye, and desponding Britain draws back her sable veil, and smiles. It gives me inward satisfaction to know that the laurels you have wreathed sprang from those principles and religious truths which alone constitute the Hero."

Mrs. Nelson wrote to her husband, saying, "Thank God you are well, and Josiah. My anxiety was far beyond my powers of expression. M. Nelson and Captain Locker behaved humanely, and attentive to me. They wrote immediately, Captain Locker assuring me you were perfectly well, Maurice begging me not to believe idle reports, the *Gazette* saying you were slightly wounded. Altogether, my dearest husband, my

sufferings were great." She goes on, after a little gossip, "I shall not be myself till I hear from you again. What can I attempt to say to you about Boarding? You have been most wonderfully protected: you have done desperate actions enough. Now may I—indeed I do—beg that you never Board again. *Leave* it for *Captains*"—Nelson had just been made Rear-Admiral. She returns to the subject in a later letter: "I sincerely hope, my dear husband, that all these wonderful and desperate actions—such as boarding ships—you will leave to others. With the protection of a Supreme Being, you have acquired a character, or name, which all hands agree cannot be greater: therefore, rest satisfied."

Her fears were natural and call for sympathy, but they were unfortunately expressed. Such letters would come like a cup of tepid water to Nelson's vital lips, when he wanted the wine of praise poured out with a generous hand. What was the use of telling his ardent spirit to "rest satisfied," when nothing but death could quench its fire? The woman is so fully shown in her statement at the close of the first letter she wrote him after the battle, "I can bear all my extreme good fortune"—but that was not the assurance Nelson needed, he wanted tears, tenderness, exultation, glowing praises; all the things that Emma Hamilton knew so unfortunately well how to give him in later years. Compare her letter to him after the Nile, when she had only met him

once—excitable, ill-balanced, yet with something of the real heroic ring—with his wife's at all times temperate epistles. Frances Nelson was like a muffled instrument, incapable of any clear response even to the battles of St. Vincent or the Nile.

Public honours, of course, followed this most picturesque and needful victory. As Commander-in-Chief on that glorious occasion, Jervis was made Earl of St. Vincent, the name by which he is most familiarly known. Nelson was made a Knight of the Bath instead of a baronet, by his own wishes. Colonel Drinkwater, who was an eye-witness of the battle and a friend of Nelson's, wrote a "Narrative" which gives valuable information on this point. The morning after the fight he had a long conversation with Nelson as to the details of the engagement: "Towards the conclusion of this interesting interview," wrote Colonel Drinkwater, "I repeated my cordial felicitations at his personal safety, after such very perilous achievements. I then adverted to the honours that must attend such distinguished services. 'The Admiral,' I observed, 'will of course be made a Peer, and his seconds in command noticed accordingly. As for you, Commodore,' I continued, 'they will make you a Baronet.' The word was scarcely uttered, when placing his hand on my arm, and, looking me most expressively in the face, he said, 'No, no: if they want to mark my services, it must not be in that manner.' 'Oh!' said I, interrupting him, 'you wish to be made a Knight

of the Bath'; for I could not imagine that his ambition, at that time, led him to expect a Peerage. My supposition proved to be correct, for he instantly answered me, 'Yes, if my services have been of any value, let them be noticed in a way that the public may know me, or them.' I cannot distinctly remember which of these terms was used, but, from his manner, I could have no doubt of his meaning, that he wished to bear about his person some honorary distinction, to attract the public eye, and mark his professional services."

It had been the King's intention to create Nelson a baronet. But when Sir Gilbert Elliot, who took a warm interest in Nelson's welfare, called on Colonel Drinkwater in London and told him this news, the Colonel informed him how unwelcome it would be to the hero they intended to honour. Nelson, as a matter of fact, had other reasons than those given above for not wishing a baronetcy—he had neither the heir nor the means to support it. On hearing this, Sir Gilbert Elliot took steps to make Nelson's wishes known in the proper quarters, and on May 27th the Honour was notified in the *London Gazette*, though Nelson had known it earlier. He wrote characteristically to his wife on this occasion: "Though we can afford no more than a Cottage—yet, with a contented mind, my dearest Fanny, my Chains, Medals, and Ribbons are all-sufficient. We must be contented with a little, and the cottage near Norwich, or any other place you like better, will, I assure you, satisfy

me. Do not mention this mark of the Royal Favour to any one except my Father." He tells his brother, "I must be delighted, when, from the King to the Peasant, all are willing to do me honour."

Nelson was never personally installed as a Knight of the Bath, for Captain Sir William Bolton, who married Nelson's niece, Catherine Bolton, was his proxy at that stately ceremony.

Other honours were showered upon him; many cities proffered him their Freedoms, including London, Bath, Bristol, Norwich, and several more. To Norwich, with that Norfolk patriotism which was always so strong in his breast, Nelson had presented the sword of the Spanish Admiral, for, as he said in the letter which accompanied the gift, being born in the County of Norfolk he would like it to be "preserved as a Memento of the Event, and of my Affection for my Native County."

Rear-Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson did not at once return to England to enjoy his honours and the congratulations of his family. Instead, as he wrote to his wife—after assuring her of his love, affection, and esteem for her person and character, which the more he saw of the world the more he must admire—"The imperious call of honour to serve my Country, is the only thing which keeps me a moment from you, and a hope, that by staying a little longer, it may enable you to enjoy those little luxuries which you so highly merit. I pray

REAR-ADMIRAL SIR HORATIO NELSON, K.B.

From an Engraving by W. Evans after the Drawing by H. Edridge.

God it may soon be peace, and that we may get into the cottage."

He goes on to tell his wife of his crest and arms and motto—"Faith and Works"—and hopes she will like them. Then without a break he jumps from the "British Lion tearing the Spanish flag" to blankets: "I intend my next winter's gift at Burnham should be fifty good large blankets of the very best quality, and they will last for seven years at least. This will not take from anything the Parish might give. I wish inquiry to be made, and the blankets ordered of some worthy man; they are to be at my father's disposal in November.'

His thoughts turn Norfolk-wards in a later letter to his wife, where he says, "I should be glad if the house were bought: and if you do not object, I should like Norfolk in preference to any other part of the Kingdom."

In the same letter he says, "I have had flattery enough to make me vain, and success enough to make me confident"; and the statement is somewhat ominous, coming so close as it does to the looming disaster of Teneriffe, where he lost his right arm and nearly his life, which was only saved by the exertions of his stepson Josiah Nisbet. Thirteen days after that happy statement to his wife, Nelson, stricken and heart-broken, was writing with his left hand the pathetic letter to his Commander-in-Chief, which begins, "I am become a burthen to my friends, and useless to my Country. . . . When I leave your command,

I become dead to the world; I go hence, and am no more seen." He declares a few days later that a "left-handed Admiral will never again be considered as useful, therefore the sooner I get to a very humble cottage the better, and make room for a better man to serve the State."

It seemed as if in the very expansion of his powers he was smitten down, and his day ended before it was half begun. It would have taken a very hopeful heart to believe that his three greatest battle-triumphs were yet to come.

CHAPTER VI: THE WOUNDED HERO

"I SHALL come one day or other laughing back, when we will retire from the busy scenes of life"—so Nelson had written to his wife a few months before he actually did come back, not laughing. He returned suffering sadly in mind and body, from shattered hopes and from a badly amputated arm. Part of the nerve had been tied in with the ligature and for months he endured great agony, which had its lasting results, for even when the pain had passed it left a neuralgic tendency and irritability which remained with him the rest of his life.

So soon as he reached England, after obtaining leave to strike his flag, he took what he bitterly described as his "mutilated carcase" to Bath, where he joined his wife and father, who, it will be remembered, had taken a furnished house there for three years. While at sea on his way home, Nelson had written to his wife to tell her of his lost arm, saying, in the somewhat odd way common to him at times, "I am so confident of your affection, that I feel the pleasure you will receive will be equal, whether my letter is wrote by my right hand or left." This letter had not long preceded his own arrival at Bath. The

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difference of the hand-writing, we are told, at first perplexed his wife and father: "The dreadful change in the well-known hand-writing created an uncertainty, which magnified all that could have happened. At last, Mrs. Bolton, who was on a visit to her father, at his request, disclosed the contents; she was sincerely attached to her brother, and for some minutes their affectionate sympathy rendered them insensible to the joy of his return. Whilst they were alternately expecting and despairing of his arrival, Lady Nelson one evening suddenly distinguished the sound of her husband's voice directing his carriage where to stop. The affectionate mind and filial regard of a son so long absent were rewarded by the blessings of an aged father and by the tenderness of the faithful partner of his early and more humble fortunes." *

That is a little home-scene which stands out from the darkness of a long-past September evening —the sudden voice from outside breaking on that waiting room where the father and wife and sister were gathered, the checking of the horses, the sudden cry and broken exclamations as his wife fled to him; and then the entry of Nelson from the wars into that sheltered room—pale from his journey and his sufferings, blinking a little at the candlelight after the night air, and with his empty coat sleeve pinned upon his breast. We

* Clarke and M'Arthur.

can imagine the tears and consolations, his father's tremulous praises and gratitude to God. We dwell in imagination on this return of Nelson after the years at sea, for it was the last time he came back untroubled to the bosom of his family, the last time his wife's caresses were sweet to him. No shadow of another woman had then darkened his peace. The only bitterness of that return was his lost arm and, as he believed, his lost prospects. At first his wound promised to heal well, and, soothed by the attentions of the wife from whom he had been so long parted and by the placid society of his father, he seems to have recovered his equanimity and cheerfulness. On September 6th he wrote to his brother, "My arm is in the fairest way of soon healing. Next week, I intend to be in town, and it is not impossible but I may visit Norfolk for a few days, especially if a decent house is likely to be met with near Norwich; but Wroxham very far indeed exceeds my purse. Bath will be my home till next spring."

We get another glimpse of him from a letter his wife wrote to his uncle on the same day: "I beg you will accept the united thanks of my dear husband and myself for your kind inquiries and truly friendly invitation to your house, which we would have accepted had it not been for the necessity of my husband's arm being dressed every day by a surgeon. We purpose being in London the middle of next week. I have written to Mr. M. Nelson to take us a lodging, and as soon

as my husband can do without a surgeon, we shall spend some time with you. Earl Spencer has written a handsome letter, and is to be in town next week. My husband's spirits are very good, although he suffers a good deal of pain—the arm is taken off very high, near the shoulder. Opium procures him rest, and last night he was pretty quiet. The Corporation have handsomely congratulated him on his safe arrival. Such a letter from Lord Hood !—it does him honour, and I have forgot the ill treatment of former years which my good man received from him. Everything which concerns my husband I know you feel interested in, therefore shall not make any excuses for what I have told you."

The Duke of Clarence wrote to Bath to condole with the hero on his loss, and like a flash from the midst of pain and sufferings, dulled with opium, we have Nelson's answer: "Not a scrap of that ardour with which I have hitherto served our King has been shot away." It is equally characteristic that he early found time to write to the father of his beloved little Hoste, saying that his "dear good son" was as gallant as a less fortunate young officer who was killed at Teneriffe, "and I hope he will long live to honour Norfolk and England. . . . His worth both as a man, and as an Officer, exceeds all which the most sincere friend can say of him. I pray God to bless my dear William." As to himself, Nelson supposes he was getting well too fast, for he is "beset with a Physician, Surgeon,

and Apothecary, and, to say the truth, am suffering much pain with some fever."

In spite of his cure being so far from accomplished, Nelson and his wife left Bath about the middle of September and went to London, where they stayed "at the lodgings of Mr. Jones," 141, Bond Street. Before leaving Bath, Nelson had requested his wife to attend the dressing of his arm "until she had acquired sufficient skill and resolution to perform it herself, which she afterwards did continually." When he arrived in London he tried one surgeon after another, and none apparently could give him much relief save "recommending that the cure should be left to time and nature." His only consolation was, as he wrote to Lord St. Vincent, "I found my domestic happiness perfect, and I hope time will bring me about again; but I have suffered great misery."

While he was still in this unhappy state he was invested with the Ensigns of the Order of the Bath, by King George III., on September 27th. His loyal heart would be cheered by the marked graciousness of his sovereign on this occasion. "You have lost your right arm," observed the King, compassionately. "But not my right hand," Nelson quickly exclaimed, "as I have the honour of presenting Captain Berry to you. And, besides, may it please your Majesty, I can never think that a loss which the performance of my duty has occasioned; and, so long as I have a foot to stand on, I will combat for my country and King."

This bit of apparent bombast was quite characteristic and natural in Nelson—he was never afraid of words like "Country" and "Duty," words too big for other men, but twin brothers of his soul. The King is recorded to have said, after acknowledging all he had done and suffered, "But your Country has a claim for a bit more of you."

As it was intended to grant him a pension of £1,000 a year, he had to state his services in a memorial to the King, which he did, saying, "Your Memorialist has actually been engaged against the Enemy upwards of one hundred and twenty times. In which service your Memorialist has lost his right eye and arm, and been severely wounded and bruised in his body. All of which services and wounds your Memorialist most humbly submits to your Majesty's most gracious consideration."

Even with such undoubted wounds as his, Nelson had to go through all the necessary formalities. Of these formalities Southey tells a little tale: "Not having been in England till now since he lost his eye, he went to receive a year's pay as smart money, but could not obtain payment because he had neglected to bring a certificate from a surgeon that the sight was actually destroyed. A little irritated that this form should be insisted on, because, though the fact was not apparent, he thought it was sufficiently notorious, he procured a certificate at the same time for the loss of his arm, saying they might as well doubt one as

the other. This put him in good humour with himself, and with the clerk who had offended him. On his return to the office, the clerk, finding it was only the annual pay of a captain, observed he thought it had been more. 'Oh,' replied Nelson, 'this is only for an eye. In a few days I shall come for an arm, and in a little longer, God knows, most probably for a leg.' Accordingly, he soon afterwards went, and with perfect good humour exhibited the certificate for the loss of his arm."

In spite of wounds and suffering Nelson's ardour for his country was unquenchable. One day in October, when talking with Colonel Drinkwater, who had been with him at the battle of St. Vincent, and hearing that an engagement was hourly expected between Admiral Duncan and the Dutch, "he started up in his peculiar, energetic manner, notwithstanding Lady Nelson's attempt to quiet him, and stretching out his unwounded arm, 'Drinkwater,' said he, 'I would give this other arm to be with Duncan at this moment.'"

When the news of the victory of Camperdown reached London, Nelson had gone to bed, after a day of pain, hoping to win a little sleep with the help of laudanum. The mob, celebrating the victory, which was unknown to the Nelsons, passed down Bond Street, and finding their windows unilluminated, banged upon the door: "It was at length opened by a servant, who informed them that Sir Horatio Nelson, who had been so badly wounded, lodged there, and could not be disturbed.

A general interest for the valuable life of their honoured admiral for an instant repressed the joy which Duncan's victory had occasioned. 'You will hear no more from us to-night,' exclaimed the foremost of the party; and that universal sympathy for the health of Nelson which pervaded even the minds of the lowest of his countrymen was clearly shown, no subsequent visit being paid by the mob, notwithstanding the tumult that prevailed."

It was not till December that Nelson's sufferings came to a close from the wound he had received nearly six months earlier. Christian gratitude was as marked in him as in his father, and when he was sufficiently well he went to the clerk of St. George's, Hanover Square, and left with him a sheet of paper on which he had written, "An Officer desires to return thanks to Almighty God for his perfect recovery from a severe wound, and also for many mercies bestowed upon him. December 8th, 1797 (for next Sunday)."

In the same spirit his good father wrote to him from Bath, where he had remained: "Your peculiar preservation Providence has ordained for great and wise purposes: He evidently gives His angels charge concerning thee."

An odd little glimpse of Nelson at this time is given in the words of Countess Spencer, wife of the First Lord of the Admiralty, as written down by Frances Lady Shelley.* "The first time I

* *The Diary of Frances Lady Shelley.* Edited by Richard Edgcumbe (John Murray, 1912.)

ever saw Nelson," said Lady Spencer, "was in the drawing-room at the Admiralty; and a most uncouth creature I thought him. He was just returned from Teneriffe, after having lost his arm. He looked so sickly it was painful to see him; and his general appearance was that of an idiot; so much so, that when he spoke, and his wonderful mind broke forth, it was a sort of surprise that rivetted my whole attention. I desired him to call next day, and he continued to visit me daily, during his stay in England."

It was Lady Spencer who wrote Nelson that glowing letter after the Nile which almost excelled in ardour Lady Hamilton's famous epistle. She was a woman of great brilliance and beauty, and her social graces added much to her husband's administration. Nelson called her "the Lady of the Admiralty."

On December 19th the King attended a public thanksgiving at St. Paul's for the naval victories, and Nelson was present in the procession—little thinking how closely St. Paul's was to be associated with his own glories and his own death. Another link was to weld him to the City of London, for on the 28th of the same month he received the Freedom of the City, presented in a gold box, valued at a hundred guineas. In the speech he made on this occasion the Chamberlain, John Wilks, congratulated Nelson on his "distinguished valour and conduct in the favourite service of the Navy." "Many of our Naval Commanders have merited

highly of their country by their exertions, but in your case there is a rare heroic modesty, which cannot be sufficiently admired. You have given the warmest applause to your Brother-Officers and the Seamen under your command; but your own merit you have not mentioned, even in the slightest manner."

To this speech Nelson replied characteristically and shortly: "Sir, nothing could be more gratifying to me (as it must be to every Sea Officer) than receiving the high honour this day conferred upon me, in becoming a Freeman of the great City of London; and I beg you to believe, and to assure my Fellow-Citizens, that my hand and head shall ever be exerted, with all my heart, in defence of my King, the Laws, and the just liberties of my Country, in which are included everything which can be beneficial to the Capital of the Empire. I beg leave, Sir, to return you my sincere thanks for the very flattering expressions you have honoured me with on this occasion."

With all these honours about him, and with a pension as some compensation for his wounds and dangers, Nelson was at last able to realise one of his dreams—that "neat cottage" of which he had so often thought and talked. In the course of his autumn correspondence with Catherine Matcham her father says, "By a Letter yesterday from Lady N. I learn they are gone to Look at a House very near Ipswich, which they mean to purchase if no Great obstacle prevents." This house, which

"THE ROUNDWOOD," IPSWICH.

(*Front and side views.*)

they did purchase, is The Roundwood—so called from the wood of the estate which formed nearly a circle—near Ipswich, still standing, and so far as can be judged, much as they must have known it. Of a fair size, it is hardly the "neat cottage," which, by the time he was able to buy a home, would not quite have fitted the needs of Rear-Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson and the natural social ambitions of his wife. It is a plain and pleasant house with white stucco walls and grey slate roof. There are several long windows opening to the lawn, two of them having curious round fan-lights heading them. The gardens are large, even now being nine and a half acres in extent, while when Nelson bought it there was more land attached. Fine old trees of elm and sweet chestnut stand round the house, and there is a yew hedge which Nelson must have known. The Roundwood is of a particular interest; it is the first home he had in England that was actually his own. Up to the time of this purchase he had lived, when ashore, at his father's Parsonage or in lodgings in London and Bath. It has also another interest as being the only one of Nelson's homes still standing—the Parsonage House at Burnham Thorpe is gone, so is that beloved Merton in Surrey which he bought in his last years. Peaceful, pleasant, spacious is The Roundwood, and as such Nelson chose and liked it, though, as circumstances turned out, he spent little time under its roof.

When Nelson sailed in the *Vanguard* on the 1st

of April, 1798, to join St. Vincent off Cadiz, the purchase was completed and the house his. In May his wife wrote to him: "On Sunday, the 20th of May, we arrived at Round-Wood. The satisfaction I felt was very great on being under your own roof. No thanks to any earthly being. Our Father was for staying, although the house had little or no accommodation. He viewed everything attentively, and I never saw him so thoroughly satisfied as he was, and says the more he examines everything the better he is pleased." A little later, when the house had been made comfortable, Nelson's father gave a more detailed description in a letter to Catherine: "On Sunday Lady N. my Self, Kitty Bolton and the two servants came to Roundwood and took possession of a Neat, strong, wellbuilt and convenient House, consisting of 2 parlors, a small hansome vestibule and staircase, 6 bedrooms and 2 dressingrooms, with offices of every denomination and good cellars. The little pleasure ground and small garden are laid out in good taste and All looks like a Gentleman's House. Seems to answer every wish of yr Bro: and His wife. The Farm is 50 acres of Good Land adjoining, divided into severall small enclosures and lett to a very substantiall civil Tenant." *

But before the Admiral left England, after settling his wife at Ipswich, they had both spent some time at Bath. In January, 1798, there was

* *The Nelsons of Burnham Thorpe.*

a family gathering in the sheltered Somerset city, Nelson in great spirits at the recovery from pain and his appointment to the *Vanguard*. He had been down to Chatham on naval business, and wrote that "Sheerness is a miserable place." But Bath he evidently did not find so, as witness this letter of January 29th, which contains several characteristic Nelsonian sentiments: "I was much flattered by the Marquis's [of Lansdowne] kind notice of me, and I beg you will make my respects acceptable to him. Tell him that I possess his place in Mr. Palmer's box; but his Lordship did not tell me all its charms, that generally some of the handsomest ladies in Bath are partakers in the box, and was I a bachelor I would not answer for being tempted; but as I am possessed of everything which is valuable in a wife, I have no occasion to think beyond a pretty face. I am sorry the King is so poor. Had he been worth what those vile dogs of Opposition think, what a vast sum would have been given to the Nation; but I now hope all the Nation will subscribe liberally. [To the voluntary subscription for the support of the war.] You will believe that I do not urge others to give, and withhold myself; but my mode of subscribing will be novel in its manner, and by doing it, I mean to debar myself of many comforts to serve my Country, and I expect great consolation every time I cut a slice of salt beef instead of mutton."

In March Nelson was back in Bond Street—at

No. 96 this time—and writing to Lady Collier, widow of Vice-Admiral Sir George Collier, a note which is amusing from its mixture of the first and third persons: "From twelve till one this day I shall be at home, and if Lady Collier does not find it convenient to come to Bond Street at that time, Sir H. will call on Lady Collier after he comes from the Levee about ½ past two."

On March 14th he wrote to his father at Bath: "I have this day taken leave of the King; and on Saturday I expect to be ordered to leave town for Portsmouth."

In the *Diary of Frances Lady Shelley* there is this further very interesting reminiscence of Nelson by the Countess Spencer: "The day before he was to sail he called upon me as usual, but, on leaving, he took a most solemn farewell, saying that if he fell, he depended upon my kindness to his wife—an angel, whose care had saved his life! I should explain that, although during Lord Spencer's administration no sea captain ever returned without being asked to dinner by us, I made it a rule not to receive their wives. Nelson said, that out of deference to my known determination, he had not begged to introduce Lady Nelson to me; yet, if I would take notice of her, it would make him the happiest man alive. He said he felt convinced I must like her. That she was beautiful, accomplished; but, above all, that her angelic tenderness to him was beyond imagination. He told me that his wife had dressed his wounds, and

that her care alone had saved his life. In short, he pressed me to see her, with an earnestness of which Nelson alone was capable.

"In these circumstances, I begged that he would bring her with him that day to dinner. He did so, and his attentions to her were those of a lover. He handed her to dinner, and sat by her; apologising to me, by saying that he was so little with her, that he would not, voluntarily, lose an instant of her society."

How differently Nelson treated his wife the next time he and she dined at the Admiralty will be shown in due course; the pity of it is emphasised by this outburst of unusual tenderness on the eve of a parting which, in essentials, was final.

It was probably at this time of her first intercourse with Nelson, when he had just lost his arm, that the enthusiastic Lady Spencer presented the Admiral with the combined gold knife and fork, manageable with one hand, which still exists.

The day after this dinner Nelson left for Portsmouth and from there sailed from England in the *Vanguard*, which was to be his flagship at the Nile. When once more he beheld his native shores he was the most honoured and belauded Sea Officer of his time, the halo of an unparalleled victory surrounding him. But his heart was changed, his peace was gone; he was not the same man to whom his wife and father had said good-bye. Their farewells, in the light of later events, seem touched with forebodings. His wife was exception-

ally depressed at this parting, and Nelson strove to cheer her. "My ambition," he told her, "is satisfied. I now go to raise you to that rank in which I have long wished to see you."

In his father's farewell letter there is a prophetic note: "Who can see without anxiety that your duty long has, and will still lead you into paths where perhaps roses grow, but intermixed with many a thorn?"

"My character and good name are in my own keeping," Nelson had too-confidently stated a few years earlier, little guessing the time would come when they would be in a woman's keeping—a woman who by force of circumstance and temperament had never heard the grave and warning voice that cries, with a wisdom ages old, "Have regard to thy name; for that shall continue with thee above a thousand great treasures of gold."

CHAPTER VII: THE YEARS OF ABSENCE

NOT to follow Nelson to the Nile!—it is difficult to stay at home and look on, but we must do as his father and his wife did, and behold it all through letters, catch the backward glances our Admiral throws us even amid the battle-smoke; begin to wonder and to fear, even as they did, whether the sunshine of Naples and the smiles of the "divine Emma" may not prove too intoxicating to one who was at heart so passionate and impetuous, though his home-life and surroundings had been so normal and placid hitherto. Nelson's love of England was continuous and unchanging; it was always his desire and thought in absence, a home there his constant dream—though the nature of the home and the woman who was to rule it altered in later years. But there is no doubt that Italian sun, and battle and love, and all the complicated events between 1798 and 1800 ripened him to the Nelson we know best. Those years brought him glory such as had not been won at sea in the memory of man; they also brought wrong-doing and domestic disaster, and the inevitable consequence of stress of mind to a nature like his, misery and rebellion —with that broadening of soul which follows suffer-

ing. All the poignancy of Nelson, which makes him so different from other men, only appears after he had tangled his heart in an unlawful passion and suffered for it—even while he persisted in it—as his father's son would suffer.

But all this was before him and unguessed when he sailed from England, and his early letters to his "dearest Fanny" are mildly concerned about the deficiencies of his wardrobe. "My black stock and buckle has not yet appeared," he wrote from St. Helens, "nor are the keys of my dressing-stand sent." Two days later he is still more troubled: "I have looked over my linen, and find it very different to your list in the articles as follows:—thirteen silk pocket handkerchiefs: only six new, five old. Thirteen cambric ditto: I have sixteen. Twelve cravats: I have only eleven. Six Genoa velvet stocks: I have only three. You have put down thirty huckaback towels: I have from 1 to 10." A curious little human detail to survive, that Nelson should be bothered about his washing! From Lisbon he wrote to his wife, "I can hardly describe to you the miserable appearance of this place after seeing England." In another letter he says, "I direct this to our Cottage, where I hope you will fix yourself in comfort."

Lady Nelson was settled at Roundwood in June, and from there the Reverend Edmund Nelson wrote to Catherine that Mrs. Bolton and her daughters had been paying them a week's visit,

and adds: "Lady N. is well pleased with everything at Ipswich, has been at two Balls, and I hope the situation will be very comfortable." From Roundwood, in the following month, Lady Nelson wrote to her "dearest Husband": "I am now writing opposite to your portrait. The likeness is great: I am well satisfied with Abbot. I really began to think he had no intention of letting me have my own property, which I am not a little attached to. Indeed, it is more than attachment—it is real affection. It is my company—my sincere friend, in your absence. Our good father was delighted with the likeness. The room is very near eleven feet, therefore, it stands very well, opposite the East window."

This was the familiar portrait painted by Lemuel Abbott in 1797, which shows Nelson with his hair worn tossed back from the forehead in his early manner—it was not till after the Nile that he brought it down to hide the scar he got then—and adorned only by the star of the Order of the Bath on his breast, instead of the galaxy of later years. The portrait is good, but it does not go deep, and though Lady Nelson declared she was "well satisfied," it is a little difficult to believe that she was a very penetrating judge. Abbott painted Nelson on several occasions, and his tendency was to smooth out, instead of emphasising character. He painted the Admiral again on his return to England in 1800, wearing his cocked hat and the diamond chelenk, or plume of triumph,

given him by the Sultan of Turkey. The face here is much grimmer, and shows something of Nelson's fighting look—something of that stern and iron resolution which was in him under all the ardour and the tenderness; which enabled him to take tremendous risks and win tremendous battles. He must have been difficult to paint, for his face varied so much in expression: he could look grim and hard, as in this later portrait of Abbott's, or in Thaller's powerful bust, with its deeply accentuated dragging lines around the mouth; and he could look as sensitive and melancholy as in Hoppner's well-known portrait. The *Naval Chronicle* records that one artist at least felt the task of painting Nelson beyond his powers. After the Nile, the "band of brothers" were anxious to have a portrait of their Admiral, and to that end asked "one of the most eminent painters in Italy" to come to breakfast and meet Nelson, beginning his picture immediately afterwards. The artist came, but made no preparation for setting to work, and on being asked when he intended to commence the portrait, said, "Never! There is such a mixture of humility with ambition in Lord Nelson's countenance, that I dare not risk the attempt."

There was an artist who at least could see—that he dare not paint is our loss. The contradictory qualities of Nelson's character are part of its perennial charm. In battle he was both fire and ice; while he could be petulant and perverse as a child, or tender, passionate, and self-sacrificing.

Hoppner has caught the almost feminine sweetness of his look at times—the sensitive lips, the melancholy-lidded eyes, the pain-drawn lines round the mouth; the whole sharpened and eager face shows us the quick workings of that spirit which suffered and dared so much. The very heights to which Nelson could rise were only possible to a temperament as quickly inspired and depressed as his. Heavier natures can neither suffer nor rejoice with such exquisite acuteness. In our Admiral's face can be seen the fine metal he was compact of—"the bright steel quivering"—shaken by grief and regret and yearning, visited by storms of anguish in those long pursuits of a flying foe which almost tore his frail body in pieces; but through it all the quality of the "bright steel" is felt, instant in action, inevitable as fate, a very thunderbolt of battle. The feminine side of him gave lovableness to his character, gave the "Nelson touch" its amazing power to wring and brighten the hearts of men; but it never impaired or weakened his masculine spirit, his close grip of reality, his unshaken courage, his inspired rightness of action.

It was four months from Nelson's leaving England in the spring of 1798 to the Battle of the Nile: it was two months after that before the news of the victory reached England. The slowness with which news travelled in those days was accentuated by the unfortunate capture of the *Leander* on her homeward way with despatches.

Therefore we have Nelson's father calmly writing from Ipswich on September 17th—when the wounded of the Nile were either dead or recovered, the shot holes mended, the triumph celebrated: "Lady N. is apprehensive this place may be too cold for the winter, and Morover the House wants paint &, therfore Intends, no accident preventing, to remove to Bath about the End of Nov."

The state of anxiety and ignorance in which the nation was left is shown by a letter Lord Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty, wrote to Nelson on September 30th: "You may easily, my dear Sir, conceive the anxiety we have been under about you, and your operations; and the distance at which you are placed from us, increased as it is by the present inconvenient situation of Europe for communication, makes it impossible almost to know how and what to write . . . God bless you, dear Sir Horatio, and grant that we may very soon have some good tidings from you."

The good tidings came very soon after this. Lady Spencer has vividly described how the news affected her husband:* "I was sitting in my drawing-room talking to Mr. Grenville over the *pros* and *cons*; when Mr. Harrison, Lord Spencer's secretary, burst into the room, and cried: 'Such a victory was never heard of—the town is in an uproar—my lord is in his office—the particulars have not transpired.' And away he went!

* *Diary of Frances Lady Shelley.*

"In about half an hour Lord Spencer sent for me. I found him stretched on his bed—pale as death! He pressed my hand and said: 'God be thanked!' At length my suspense was relieved. I heard full particulars from the secretaries. They told me that when Lord Spencer heard that there was not even one ship lost, he turned round, without speaking, and had scarcely got out of his office, when he fell on the floor insensible. His joy had mastered him!"

The great news found the hero's father and wife still at Roundwood. Instantly the father wrote to Catherine Matcham, then living at Kensington Place, Bath: "This morn an express from Lord Duncan arrived at Roundwood, with the News of the Glorious victory your Great and Good Brother has obtained. . . . A universall Joy is Spread."

Congratulations were, of course, showered upon the Nelson family by all their friends and acquaintances, public and private. When the great tidings reached Ipswich on October 3rd, the Freedom was instantly voted to the victorious Admiral whose home was so near. Flags were hoisted on the churches and all the bells rung. In the evening, at five o'clock, the Ipswich Volunteers and light cavalry assembled on the Stoke Hills, and forming a line a mile long, they fired a *feu de joie*, repeating it three times. At night the town was illuminated. On the 16th a ball was given at the Assembly Rooms in Tower Street, and this spirited little account from the *Ipswich*

Journal of Saturday, October 20th, gives the feeling of the time:

"The Ball and Supper at the Assembly Rooms in this town on Tuesday last, in commemoration of the Right Hon. Admiral Lord Nelson's victory, were in a high degree brilliant, and worthy of the great and important occasion. At 7 o'clock the company began to assemble; about 8 Lady Nelson's arrival was announced by the ringing of bells and repeated huzzas of a vast concourse of people in the street. Her Ladyship was introduced into the Ball-room by Admiral Sir Richard Hughes, Bart., and Admiral Reeve, who conducted her to the top of the room, attended by the Rev. Mr. Nelson, the venerable father of the Admiral. Then followed Captain Bourchier leading up Miss Berry, sister to Captain Berry of the *Vanguard*. On their entrance they were welcomed by the grateful respects of the company, the regimental Bands playing 'Rule Britannia.' It is not easy to conceive the sensations that at this time prevailed; all seemed to feel in their hearts an event so glorious to their King and Country, that had been the means of concentrating the principal families in the town and neighbourhood.

"Dancing soon after commenced, and continued until near 12, when the company consisting of 300, were regaled with an elegant supper. Many appropriate toasts were drunk, and much social harmony exhibited during a festive period of two hours. Dancing was then resumed and continued

until the morning. The Ball-room was ornamented with wreaths of flowers; at the top was a whole length transparency of the Gallant Admiral surrounded by naval trophies, with a drawn sword in his left hand, and his right foot upon a cannon. On the side of the room were two other transparencies; one representing the battle of Bequiers, and the other Neptune, ploughing the ocean with the Hero of the Nile in his car. The outside of the Assembly Room was lighted up with variegated lamps. Mirth and good humour went hand in hand, and some of the jovial fools did not depart till the glow-worm had showed the matin to be near."

It must have been a proud and unclouded evening to Lady Nelson, the wife of the nation's hero, and cause of more chastened happiness to the good old Rector. In answer to a congratulatory letter from the Reverend Bryan Allott, his neighbour in Norfolk, Nelson's father wrote in his characteristic way: "My great and good son went into the world without fortune, but with a heart replete with every moral and religious virtue: these have been his compass to steer by, and it has pleased God to be his shield in the day of Battle, and to give success to his wishes to be of use to his country, which seems sensible of his services. But should he ever meet with ingratitude, his scars would plead his cause; for at the siege of Bastia he lost an eye, at Teneriffe an arm, on the memorable 14th of February he received

a severe blow on his body, which he still feels, and now a wound on the head. After all this, you will believe that his bloom of countenance must be faded; but the spirit beareth up as yet as vigorous as ever. On the 29th of September he completed his fortieth year, cheerful, generous, and good; fearing no evil, because he has done none; an honour to my grey hairs, which with every mark of old age increase fast upon me."

Substantial signs that his country delighted to honour him were given to Nelson. On the 6th of October—only four days after Captain Capel brought the glorious news to the Admiralty—he was created a peer, by the title of Baron Nelson of the Nile and of Burnham Thorpe in the county of Norfolk, with a pension of £2,000 per annum. When the Grant was moved in the House of Commons, General Walpole expressed the opinion that a higher degree of rank should be conferred. Pitt answered that it was needless to enter into the question. "Admiral Nelson's fame," he declared, "would be coequal with the British name; and it would be remembered that he had obtained the greatest naval victory on record, when no man would think of asking, whether he had been created a baron, a viscount, or an earl."

The thanks of both Houses of Parliament was voted to Nelson, and Lord Minto, who, as Sir Gilbert Elliot, had known the hero in earlier days, made a noble and touching speech on this occasion. He referred to the battle as "this more

than epic action." He said, amid a speech too long to quote in full: "Were I to indulge myself on the details of this memorable day, and in tracing all its beneficial consequences, I should quickly be drawn out of my own depth, and beyond the limits of your Lordships' time. I refrain, therefore, content with having used the opportunity of rendering to this great man, and signal event, the homage at least of an ardent and humble affection. I will indeed trust that the sentiments I profess towards my extraordinary friend will not be deemed entirely of a private nature, and may be admitted into somewhat of a higher class; since they were excited by a daily and hourly contemplation, for a considerable period of time, of the most unremitting exertions of zeal, ability, application, and courage in the service of his country: not on one occasion, but on all; nct in one branch of service, but in all; in a long course of naval vigilance, and perseverance, in battles at sea, in sieges on shore . . . It is the peculiar privilege of my friend that, from the beginning of his life, there have been few of his actions which could be surpassed, unless it were by some other action of his own."

One of Nelson's first acts after the victory was to send to the Lord Mayor of London the sword of the surviving French Admiral Blanquet, with the request that the city would accept it, "as a remembrance, that Britannia still rules the Waves, which, that she may for ever do, is the fervent

prayer of your Lordship's most obedient Servant, Horatio Nelson." In return, the City of London voted their most distinguished Freeman a sword of the value of two hundred guineas, while the East India Company gave him £10,000, and the Turkey Company a very valuable piece of plate. Abroad, diamond swords, boxes, and plumes were lavished on him, while the King of the Two Sicilies gave him the Dukedom and estate of Bronte, which, as it turned out, he never either saw or got any good from in his lifetime. His friend Alexander Davison, who had been appointed prize-agent for the captured ships, had a fine Nile medal struck at his own expense—gold for the Admiral and captains, silver for lieutenants, gilt metal for the petty officers, and bronze for every seaman and marine who served in the action.

Another Nile relic, having a special personal interest, as Nelson presented it to Lady Hamilton, is the French Admiral Brueys' silver wine-flagon,* rescued from the wreck and burning of *L'Orient*, his flagship, by some extraordinary chance. It is large and very solid, elaborate in design, with the spout in the form of a lion's head. On one side Nelson has had engraved:

" Wine Flagon of Admiral Brueys
the bravest & best of Sailors
four times wounded, the fourth time shot in
on board his ship L'Orient [twain
dying just before her explosion."

* Now in the possession of T. J. Barratt, Esq., Hampstead.

On the other side is written—

"Nelson to Emma
In Commemoration of the
Victory of the Nile
Vanguard. Sept 29th 1798
my fortieth Birthday."

Amid all the congratulations and praises of this victory there is no trace of the letter Lady Nelson must have written her triumphant husband. Letters of other women survive, notably Lady Hamilton's, Lady Spencer's, and Lady Parker's, as well as many generous and beautiful letters from Nelson's comrades-in-arms. Collingwood, in writing, remembered the wife at home: "Say to Lady Nelson when you write to her, how much I congratulate her on the safety, the honours, and the services of her husband. Good God, what must be her feelings, how great her gratitude to heaven for such mercies!"

Burnham Thorpe, as the proud birthplace of England's hero, naturally celebrated the Nile with much ardour. Most of the Nelson family being absent from Burnham, either at Ipswich or Bath, these celebrations were led by Sir Mordaunt Martin, an old friend of the Nelsons, who had lived for many years at the little market town of Burnham Westgate, close to Burnham Thorpe. In the true rural fashion, the Nile was celebrated by a sheep roasted whole and an "excellent song formed for the occasion from the old Rule Britannia

and sung by Mr. Carter and the Burnham Ulph Band." A subscription was raised for the families of the killed and wounded, and in the first evening amounted to three pounds, nineteen shillings—no mean sum for a small and poor parish, principally consisting of agricultural labourers, like Burnham. Among the first names on the list, which Sir Mordaunt Martin had pasted on the church door, was Samuel Dolman, for himself and his wife and seven children, a penny each—9*d.* That large tribute from a narrow earning would have gone home to Nelson's heart had he seen it, for he remembered the poor of his parish and knew the hardness of the labourer's lot.

While these milder festivities were taking place in England, Nelson was immersed in the gratitude and glorifications of the Sicilian Court, and in the expansive flatteries and very real kindness of Emma Hamilton. Already the Hamiltons were beginning to take a very high place in his regard. He had told his wife on his first arrival at Naples, "I hope some day to have the pleasure of introducing you to Lady Hamilton, she is one of the very best women in this world; she is an honour to her sex." A few days later he wrote to her again: "My pride is being your husband, the son of my dear father, and in having Sir William and Lady Hamilton for my friends."

Even by December of that year it seems that a little uneasiness had penetrated to the minds of Nelson's friends and relations at home, for in

that month Alexander Davison, writing to the Admiral, says: "I cannot help again repeating my sincere regret at your continuation in the Mediterranean." He goes on, "Your valuable better-half writes to you. She is in good health, but very uneasy and anxious, which is not to be wondered at. She sets off with the good old man to-morrow for Bath. . . . Lady Nelson this moment calls, and is with my wife. She bids me say, that unless you return home in a few months, she will join the Standard at Naples. Excuse a woman's tender feelings—they are too acute to be expressed."

Some time later than this Nelson's father, writing to him, said: "Though your reputation, my dear good Horatio, stands high, very high, yet we all know that the most beautiful building may receive an injury by some accidental event, or by a secret enemy, before it is completely finished. I do most heartily wish your work had received its final polish from those, in whose hands are solid, golden, and lasting ornaments."

But already Nelson was too much tangled up in the complicated affairs of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, too much wrought upon by the requests of the Queen not to desert her, and the charms of Lady Hamilton, to wrench himself free and return to his home and his family. The harm was already done, though his passion for Emma Hamilton had not reached the heights it was to know before he returned to England. Towards

the close of 1799, rumour had so definitely gone home that Admiral Goodall actually wrote to Nelson, "They say here, my good Lord, that you are Rinaldo in the arms of Armida, and that it requires the firmness of an Ubaldo and his brother knight to draw you from the enchantress." The Admiral's dear "band of brothers" were distressed for his reputation, and notably the good Trowbridge, who loved him, and wrote to him: "I trust the war will soon be over, and deliver us from a nest of everything that is infamous, and that we may enjoy the smiles of our countrymen. Your Lordship is a stranger to half that happens, or the talk it occasions . . . I beseech your Lordship leave off. I wish my pen could tell you my feelings, I am sure you would oblige me. I trust your Lordship will pardon me; it is the sincere esteem I have for you that makes me risk your displeasure."

How pathetically inadequate were Trowbridge's pleadings, when not his own honourable heart and the religious teachings of his father and all that he had hitherto held dear could make Nelson "leave off." How unhappy he was at this time is shown in many of his letters. He tells Alexander Davison that he envies none save those of the estate six feet by two. He writes to his old friend, Lady Parker: "My health is such that without a great alteration, I will venture to say a very short space of time will send me to that bourne from whence none return. . . . You who

remember me always laughing and gay, would hardly believe the change; but who can see what I have and be well in health? Kingdoms lost and a Royal Family in distress; but they are pleased to place confidence in me, and whilst I live and my services can be useful to them, I shall never leave this Country, although I know that nothing but the air of England, and peace and quietness, can perfectly restore me."

But though he wrote about coming home, he did not do so, and was determined not to do so until the Hamiltons could come with him. At last, in the spring of 1800, he received an intimation from official quarters that it was time he returned. Earl Spencer wrote to him very kindly but firmly: "I am quite clear, and I believe I am joined in opinion by all your friends here, that you will be more likely to recover your health and strength in England, than in an inactive situation at a foreign court, however pleasing the respect and gratitude shown to you for your services may be; and no testimonies of respect and gratitude, from that court to you, can be, I am convinced, too great for the very essential services you have rendered it. I trust you will receive in good part what I have taken the liberty to write to you as a friend."

In Nelson's absence from England the home-life of his family continued quietly, varied by visits to Bath and London, by the little ups and downs of old Mr. Nelson's health, by hopes—so often

deferred—of the Admiral's return, and by a careful, well-bred suppression of that uneasiness which both his wife and father could not but feel. That Lady Nelson tried to put a good face on things which must secretly have made her unhappy, even though her affections were not of the deepest, is shown in a letter she wrote her absent Lord at the close of 1799—the letter is written from Davison's house in St. James's Square: "Sir Peter and Lady Parker called yesterday. We have agreed to go and see the famous French Milliner. Lady P. declares they will put me in *sack* and send me to Bonaparté. Her spirits are good indeed. She sends Sir Peter to the Admiralty to hear when you are expected home." That was really the most important matter to her, though she consoled herself to some extent with other things: "I have ordered a suit of clothes for her Majesty's birthday. I am frightened to tell you the expense of your new chariot—nothing fine about it, only fashionable—£352, harness, etc., for one pair of horses."

Nelson's letters home at this time are scanty, and contain apologies for not writing oftener; his epistles to his wife were not calculated to make her happy, as they are cold and abrupt in tone and the expressions of affection are but formal. Some time earlier Lady Nelson had become sufficiently disturbed at the rumours and his absence to suggest that she should come out and join him. Nelson rebuked this very natural wish, and said:

"You would by February have seen how unpleasant it would have been had you followed *any* advice which carried you from England to a wandering sailor. I could, if you had come, *only* have struck my flag, and carried you back again, for it would have been impossible to have set up an establishment at either Naples or Palermo."

No impossibility is obvious, except his disinclination; for he set up an establishment at Palermo with Sir William and Lady Hamilton.

In a letter written to him shortly before he left Palermo Lady Nelson had said rather touchingly: "I can with safety put my hand on my heart and say it has been my study to please and make you happy, and I still flatter myself we shall meet before very long. I feel most sensibly all your kindnesses to my dear son, and I hope he will add much to our comfort. Our good father has been in good spirits ever since we heard from you; indeed, my spirits were quite worn out, the time has been so long."

The time had been long—and rumour and uneasiness had made it longer. When at last Lord Nelson, Duke of Bronte, set out on his homeward journey, he was accompanied by the Hamiltons, and made no scruple of showing his devotion to Lady Hamilton in that long overland progress through Europe, which he made the longer by a month's stay in Vienna. All the diarists of the day who met the Hamilton-Nelson party during this progress give an impression of uplifted

hands and raised eyebrows in their comments. It was not a happy way for the great and war-worn Admiral to return to his own country. But by the winter of 1800 his passion for Emma Hamilton had carried him beyond consideration of public opinion, and he felt that he was justified of his love because it possessed the whole of his ardent heart. Such being the situation, the break and the parting with his wife were inevitable once he reached England.

CHAPTER VIII: ENGLAND ONCE MORE.

NELSON landed at Yarmouth, in his native county of Norfolk, on the 6th of November, 1800. It was the first time England had seen the Victor of the Nile, and Yarmouth blossomed into bunting, salutes, and cheers with hearty seafaring enthusiasm. So soon as he stepped ashore, says the *Naval Chronicle*, "the populace assembled in crowds to greet the gallant Hero of the Nile; and, taking the horses from his carriage, drew him to the Wrestler's Inn amidst bursts of applause. The Mayor and Corporation immediately waited on his Lordship, and presented him with the Freedom of the Town, some time since voted to him for his eminent services. The infantry in the Town paraded before the inn where he lodged, with their regimental band, etc., firing feux-de-joie of musketry and ordnance till midnight. The Corporation in procession, with the respectable Officers of the Navy, went to church with him, accompanied by Sir William and Lady Hamilton, to join in thanksgiving. On leaving the Town, the Corps of Cavalry unexpectedly drew up, saluted, and followed the carriage, not only to the Town's end, but to the boundary of the County. All the Ships in the harbour had their colours flying."

Nelson gave £50 to the Mayor for distribution and five guineas to the Town Clerk. Lady Hamilton took part in all these doings. When the Admiral landed she walked down the little wooden jetty with her hand on his arm; when he addressed the people from the balcony of the Wrestler's Inn she stood by his side. But there were few at Yarmouth prepared to criticise Nelson's good pleasure, and a handsome woman's smiles went far with the simple seaport. The slights and coldness Nelson met with in later years came not from the people, who adored him to his death, but from those in high places who were stamped with the curious official fear of recognising a hero before he was safely buried.

Lady Nelson was not among those who welcomed the Admiral at Yarmouth. This has been unjustly put down to her coldness, but as a matter of fact it was in direct obedience to his wishes that she awaited him in London. The coldness seems to have been on Nelson's side, for he desired Alexander Davison to inform his wife of his impending return to England,—"I fancy that your anxious mind will be relieved by receiving all that you hold sacred and valuable," Davison had told her,—and then left her and every one else in considerable doubt both as to the place and time of his arrival. How little they all knew is shown by a letter of Captain Hardy's * at this time:

"Notwithstanding all the Newspapers, his Lord-

* *Three Dorset Captains.*

ship is not arrived in town, and when he will God only knows. His Father has lost all patience, her Ladyship bears up very well as yet but I much fear she also will soon despond. He certainly arrived at Yarmouth on Thursday last and there has been no letter received by anybody. Should he not arrive to-morrow I think I shall set off for Yarmouth *as I know too well the cause of his not coming.*"

On his journey to London Nelson passed through Ipswich, a fact which is naturally noticed in the *Ipswich Journal*: "Saturday between 11 and 12 o'clock Lord Nelson, accompanied by Sir W. and Lady Hamilton arrived at Bamford's Hotel in the town. As soon as it was known he was waited on by several gentlemen and congratulated on his arrival. On getting into his carriage, the populace unharnessed the horses and drew him to the end of St. Matthews street amidst repeated acclamations.

"Coming from Yarmouth his Lordship stopped nearly an hour at his house at the Roundwood, about a mile from hence, and seemed much pleased with the improvements Lady Nelson had made there in his absence."

At last, on Saturday, the 8th of November, Nelson and the Hamiltons entered London—Nelson wearing full uniform, with his three stars and two gold medals on his breast. They all drove together to Nerot's Hotel in King Street, St. James's—the St. James's Theatre now stands on the site of that

hotel. There he found his wife and father awaiting him. No record exists of what took place at this first meeting after the long separation, though his reception by Lady Nelson is said to have been extremely cold and mortifying to his feelings. At Hamburg, on his way home, Nelson had bought his wife some beautiful lace for a Court dress; but though he brought her this and many other of those "little luxuries" which he had earlier said she so deserved, his lack of affection for her and his devotion to Lady Hamilton was too obvious to be condoned.

It is quite probable—for he was as capable of petulance as of generosity—that Nelson considered himself injured by his wife's coldness and vexation, forgetting the far greater injury he had done her in his manner of coming back to her and his delay in doing it. That first meeting must have been miserable enough on both sides, and Nelson shortened it by going—though it was Saturday—in the evening to see Lord Spencer at the Admiralty.

On Monday, the 10th—owing to the 9th being Sunday—the Lord Mayor's Feast was celebrated, and Nelson was invited. When his carriage reached Ludgate Hill the mob took the horses out and drew him, with cheers, to the Guildhall. As he passed along Cheapside he was greeted with huzzas, and ladies leaned from the windows and waved their handkerchiefs to the Hero of the Nile; his slight and war-worn figure held all eyes. At the Guildhall he was presented with the sword which

had been voted to him by the City when the news of the Nile reached England: a unique and beautiful sword, with the emblematic crocodile as its hilt. Standing, as he was requested, under a triumphal arch, Nelson acknowledged the gift, saying, "It is with the greatest pride and satisfaction that I receive from the Honourable Court this testimony of their approbation of my conduct; and, with this very sword"—holding it up as he spoke—"I hope soon to aid in reducing our implacable and inveterate enemy to proper and due limits; without which, this country can neither hope for, nor expect a solid, honourable, and permanent peace."

London loved him and took every opportunity to show its worship: "Wherever he appeared, he was followed with mingled astonishment and even veneration by the thronging multitude, as a being of a superior nature." Medals were struck to commemorate his return—Britannia crowning his ship with laurels. The legend round runs, "Hail, virtuous hero! Thy victories we acknowledge, and thy God." While underneath is "Return to England, November 5, 1800."

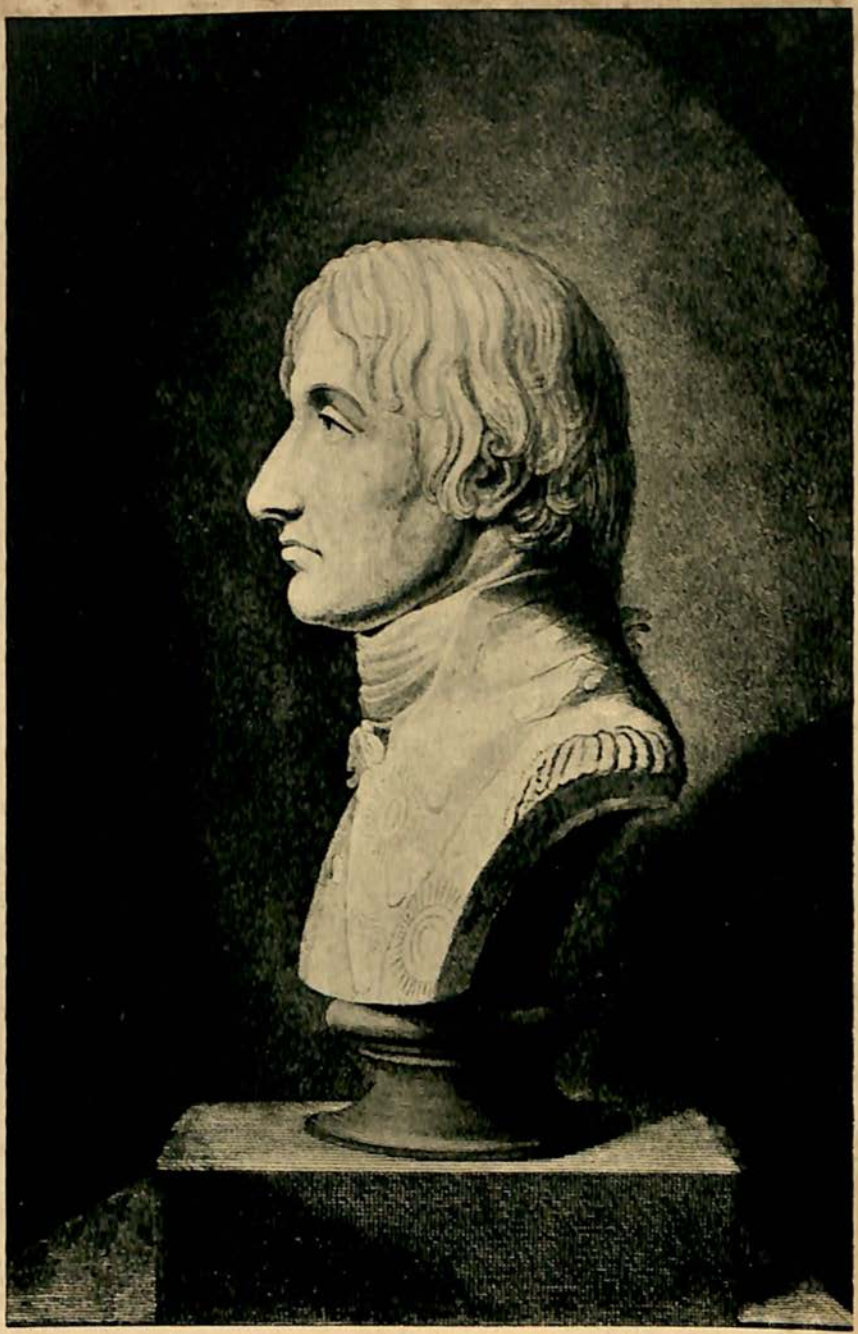
Another link which associates Nelson with the Guildhall is the bust the Honourable Mrs. Ann Seymour Damer made of him and presented to the Guildhall, for which he must have given sittings after his return from the Nile, and which was the means of preserving his Nile coat for the nation. "The last time he sat to her, he good humouredly

asked her what he could give her for the high honour which she had conferred on him, and for all the trouble which she had taken on the occasion. She answered, 'One of your old Coats'; on which he replied, 'You shall immediately have one, and it shall be the one which I value the most highly—the one which I wore during the whole day of the Battle of the Nile, and which I have never worn, nor even allowed to be brushed, since, in order that my Naval as well as other friends may know, from the streaks of perspiration and hair-powder which are still to be seen on it, the exertions which I made, and the anxiety which I felt on that day to deserve the approbation of my King and Country." *

Ten days after he had been presented with the sword at the Guildhall Nelson took his seat in the House of Lords. He was introduced in his robes between Lord Grenville and Lord Romney, preceded by the Duke of Norfolk, as hereditary Earl Marshal. He took the oaths, the usual ceremonies were gone through, and he then took his seat between the peers who introduced him.

A week or two later the Directors of the East India Company entertained him at a banquet at the London Tavern; the Duke of York and Mr. Pitt being also present. When his health was proposed, Nelson replied simply: "It afforded him sincere pleasure that the Company's possessions

* *Dispatches and Letters*, Vol. VII. Mrs. Damer presented this Coat to the Duke of Clarence, who himself presented it to Greenwich Hospital.



BUST OF NELSON BY MRS. DAMER, AT THE GUILDHALL.

From the Print in possession of Admiral Sir Wilmot Fawkes.

in India had so well flourished, owing to the wise measures pursued by the honourable Company; the death of our inveterate foe, Tippoo, was accomplished, and peace restored. The object of our enemies, the French, has thus been frustrated. As to himself, he should at all times be proud to aid the interests of the Company."

So much for the public honours and acclaim accorded to Nelson on his return from the Nile. The splendour of his position as the idol of his country but accentuates his private wretchedness. "This place of London but ill suits my disposition," he wrote, bitterly, on finding it was not possible to behave in London as he had done at Naples and Palermo. The inevitable clash between Lady Nelson and Lady Hamilton could only be postponed a little while, though at first there was some attempt to cover up an intolerable situation with civilities. Lady Nelson had been so far conciliatory as to write to Yarmouth inviting the Hamiltons to stay with herself and the Admiral at Roundwood. Soon after reaching London Lady Hamilton had written to Lady Nelson: "I would have done myself the honour of calling on you and Lord Nelson this day, but I am not well or in spirits."

It was not surprising that she was neither well nor in spirits, and it is said that on one occasion when Lady Nelson, at her husband's command, had accompanied him and the Hamiltons to a play, Lady Hamilton fainted and Lady Nelson, going

to her aid, discovered the secret which confirmed her worst fears. Nelson tried to force his wife into an attitude of friendliness to his mistress, and when he found that his infatuation met with general disapproval and censure, and that society sided with the injured and blameless Lady Nelson, it aroused all his opposition and defiance. His whole mind was distempered; he would not admit he was doing wrong, and his wife began to appear to him as an enemy to be crushed instead of a woman wounded in her tenderest feelings. Even in public he treated her ill. Lady Spencer says that he behaved to her with "every mark of dislike, and even of contempt." "Some little time after his return," she continued, "I invited Lady Nelson, and him to dinner. Having, more than once, declined the invitation, Nelson at last brought her. Such a contrast I never beheld! A trifling circumstance marked it very strongly. After dinner, Lady Nelson, who sat opposite to her husband (by the way, he never spoke during dinner, and looked blacker than all the devils), perhaps injudiciously, but with a good intention, peeled some walnuts, and offered them to him in a glass. As she handed it across the table Nelson pushed it away from him, so roughly that the glass broke against one of the dishes. There was an awkward pause; and then Lady Nelson burst into tears! When we retired to the drawing-room she told me how she was situated." *

* *Diaries of Lady Shelley.*

No wonder poor Lady Nelson wept. The contrast between that miserable dinner-party at the Admiralty and the earlier one, when her husband's "attentions to her were those of a lover," must have been too bitter to be borne.

In attempted excuse for the wrong she had done her, Emma Hamilton used to declare that Lady Nelson's temper and upbraidings drove her Lord into wandering wretchedly all one night through the streets of London, till at last he sought refuge and comfort in Grosvenor Square, where the Hamiltons were temporarily living. But under the circumstances it was not surprising if Lady Nelson was driven to tears, reproaches, and very possibly anger; and, though it may not have been the wisest way to deal with a man of Nelson's difficult temperament, it seems certain that so entirely had his love strayed from her into Emma's keeping that no steps she could have taken would have won him back. There is no evidence of any conciliatory spirit on Nelson's part towards his wife—that reckless ardour which characterised him so magnificently in battle was ruthlessly applied to his domestic problems. His wife was in his way; she was an enemy to his wishes; she could expect no consideration and he gave her none. Nothing more marked, nothing crueller to her feelings could be than his acceptance of "Vathek" Beckford's invitation to him and the Hamiltons to spend Christmas at Fonthill Abbey in Wiltshire. Lady Nelson was not even asked.

So, leaving her behind in London lodgings to spend her Christmas without the husband she had not seen for nearly three years, Nelson set out on this journey, which the enthusiastic populace converted into a triumphal procession. In passing through Salisbury he was presented with its Freedom, and escorted by cavalry some distance outside its boundaries. A little incident took place on this occasion which showed that, whatever his private troubles or public glorification, Nelson never forgot old comrades-in-arms: "At the reception at Salisbury by the Corporation, on the bestowal of the freedom of that city, in the crowd assembled before the Council House Nelson recognised a sailor who had fought at the Battle of the Nile, called him forward, expressed the gratification he felt at meeting one who had stood with him in the dangers of that celebrated day, and dismissed him with a handsome present. He perceived another man loudly huzzaing, who had been with him at the time he underwent the amputation of his arm. He beckoned him to approach, and also made him a present; upon which, on withdrawing, the man took from his bosom a piece of lace, which he had torn from the shirt-sleeve of the amputated arm, as a token in memory of his gallant commander."

And so the journey to Fonthill proceeded. There are prints in existence showing the postchaise with Nelson and Sir William and Lady Hamilton driving up to the Gothic entrance of Fonthill, the

postillions with flambeaux in their hands to light the winter dark. So soon as they entered the Park the Fonthill Volunteers presented arms, and proceeded in slow procession up to the house, the band playing "Rule Britannia." On the landing of the great flight of steps William Beckford received his guests with many flourishes, while the Volunteers performed evolutions on the lawn and fired salutes. It was the kind of scene in which Emma Hamilton delighted, and she would not be less happy when, at six o'clock, the large company sat down to dinner, and amid candlelight and compliments, at the conclusion, she and Banti and Sapio sang "God save the King," and other patriotic songs. We can imagine her full-throated singing, with every look and gesture directed towards the Admiral, who admired her so simply and whole-heartedly that on one occasion, when she was giving a representation of her famous "Attitudes" and, as the highest praise, had been compared to Mrs. Siddons, he walked up and down, saying fretfully under his breath, "Damn Mrs. Siddons!"

At Fonthill Lady Hamilton gave another exhibition of her "Attitudes" to a company so numerous that it took eleven carriages to convey the party from scene to scene of the elaborate revels Beckford had devised; and yet, in asking Nelson and the Hamiltons, he had promised a "few comfortable days of repose, uncontaminated by the sight and prattle of drawing-room parasites."

A rather amusing little episode of this Fonthill visit is told by Beckford himself, and shows the Hero of the Nile as very human in spite of his world-proclaimed courage. "I offered to show him," says Beckford, "what had been done by planting in the course of years. Nelson mounted by my side in a phaeton, drawn by four well-trained horses, which I drove. There was not the least danger, the horses being perfectly under my command, long driven by myself. Singular to say, we had not gone far before I observed a peculiar anxiety in his countenance, and presently he said: 'This is too much for me, you must set me down.' I assured him that the horses were continually driven by me, and that they were perfectly under command. All would not do. He would descend, and I walked the vehicle back again."

After these somewhat exhausting Christmas amusements Nelson returned to London, where a heavy blow fell upon him in the news of the death of his old friend and early commander, Commodore William Locker, Governor of Greenwich Hospital. To his son Nelson wrote immediately:

"From my heart do I condole with you on the great and irreparable loss we have all sustained in the death of your dear, worthy Father—a man whom to know was to love, and those who only heard of him honoured. The greatest consolation to us, his friends who remain, is, that he has left a character for honour and honesty which none

can surpass, and very, very few attain. That the posterity of the righteous will prosper we are taught to believe; and on no occasion can it be more truly verified than from my dear much lamented friend."

Captain Locker was buried at Addington in Kent, and Nelson attended the funeral.

On the 1st of January, 1801, Nelson was made a Vice-Admiral of the Blue. Early in that month came his final rupture and parting with his wife. Nelson's solicitor, William Haslewood, who was present, has left an account of what took place:

"I was breakfasting with Lord and Lady Nelson, at their lodgings in Arlington Street, and a cheerful conversation was passing on indifferent subjects, when Lord Nelson spoke of something which had been done or said by 'dear Lady Hamilton'; upon which Lady Nelson rose from her chair, and exclaimed, with much vehemence, 'I am sick of hearing of dear Lady Hamilton, and am resolved that you shall give up either her or me.' Lord Nelson, with perfect calmness, said: 'Take care, Fanny, what you say. I love you sincerely; but I cannot forget my obligations to Lady Hamilton, or speak of her otherwise than with affection and admiration.' Without one soothing word or gesture, but muttering something about her mind being made up, Lady Nelson left the room, and shortly after drove from the house. They never lived together again."

Haslewood also declared that Nelson's father,

brother, sisters and their husbands "well knew that the separation was unavoidable" on his part —a statement that certainly wants weighing.

And so, quite definitely and sharply, came the end of this marriage founded on "esteem"—a marriage of unsuited temperaments, yet not unaccompanied by happiness and tenderness in the years before Emma Hamilton cast her spells, like another Circe, upon the simple-hearted seaman. Thenceforward Lady Nelson was outcast from his life; and in that desolate separation, that widowhood of heart, she remains more touching than during the prosperous periods of her life. In her later years, we are told by one who knew her, "she continually talked of him, and always attempted to palliate his conduct towards her; was warm and enthusiastic in her praises of his public achievements, and bowed down with dignified submission to the errors of his domestic life."

During the first year of their separation, 1801, she wrote to her husband three times. Once to thank him for the "generosity and tenderness" he had shown in the handsome allowance he had made her; again to express her "thankfulness and happiness" that he had survived the Battle of the Baltic; and a third time, in December, begging that the past might be forgotten and they live together again. This last letter was returned to her unread. The breach was final. "Sooner than live the unhappy life I did when last I came

to England," Nelson passionately declared, "I would stay abroad for ever." He never paused to consider how much of that unhappiness was caused by himself and the woman for whom he had a guilty love.

The Hamiltons, by this time, had moved into a house of their own, No. 23, Piccadilly, one of the smaller houses looking on to the Green Park, and there—hearing of the departure of his wife—Sir William Hamilton asked Nelson to join them during the few further days he had in London before joining the flagship to which he had been appointed at Plymouth. At the Hamiltons' house the Admiral met Flaxman, who, with the poet Hayley, called there one day. They entered the room just as Nelson was leaving it. "Pray stop a little, my Lord," said Sir William, "I desire you to shake hands with Mr. Flaxman, for he is a man as extraordinary, in his way, as you are in yours. Believe me, he is the sculptor who ought to make your monument." "Is he?" replied Nelson, seizing his hand with his usual impulsiveness, "then I heartily wish he may." Which eventually came to pass.

He soon set out for sea again, leaving London for Plymouth early on the morning of January 13th, with his brother William. From Southampton, on the evening of the same day, he addressed one of his last notes to his wife, saying briefly:

"My dear Fanny,

"We are arrived, and heartily tired; and

with kindest regards to my father and all the family, believe me your affectionate

"NELSON."

But it was not of his lawful wife that he was thinking at this time, but of that other woman whom he called his "wife in the sight of Heaven." His pangs in leaving her were redoubled, for he expected that she was soon to become the mother of his child. "Anxiety for friends left," he wrote to her the day after parting, "and various workings of my imagination, gave me one of those severe pains of the heart that all the windows were obliged to be put down, the carriage stopped, and the perspiration was so strong that I never was wetter, and yet dead with cold." Nelson's frail body was always wrung by the intensity of his feelings. He told Troubridge on one occasion that during his search for the French fleet before the battle of the Nile he had near died with the swelling of some of the vessels of the heart. "Do not fret at anything," was his advice, which he was so pathetically unable to follow himself; "I wish I never had."

On his way to Plymouth he visited Earl St. Vincent at Tor Abbey. There had been some friction between his old commander-in-chief and himself since the cordial Mediterranean days, and in a letter to the Secretary of the Admiralty, Evan Nepean, Lord St. Vincent speaks somewhat scornfully of the Hero of the Nile: "Nelson was very low when he first came here, the day before

yesterday; appeared and acted as if he had done me an injury, and felt apprehension that I was acquainted with it. Poor man! he is devoured with vanity, weakness, and folly; was strung with ribbons, medals, &c. and yet pretended that he wished to avoid the honour and ceremonies he everywhere met with upon the road." *

At Honiton, during this journey through the West of England, we get a glimpse of a Nelson familiar and dear to us. In passing through this Devonshire lace-making village the Admiral did not forget that it was the birthplace of Captain Westcott, one of his band of brothers who fell gloriously at the Nile. Westcott was the son of a baker, and Nelson made a point of seeking out the family. "At Honiton," he wrote to Lady Hamilton, "I visited Captain Westcott's mother—poor thing. Except from the bounty of the country and Lloyds, in very poor circumstances. The brother is a tailor, but had they been chimney sweeps it was my duty to show them respect." Nelson slept a night at Honiton, and invited the mother and sister of Captain Westcott to breakfast with him next morning at the inn. He asked old Mrs. Westcott if she had received the gold medal presented by Alexander Davison to all the Nile captains, and which should have come to her on his death. On her saying that she had not received it, Nelson immediately took off his own medal,

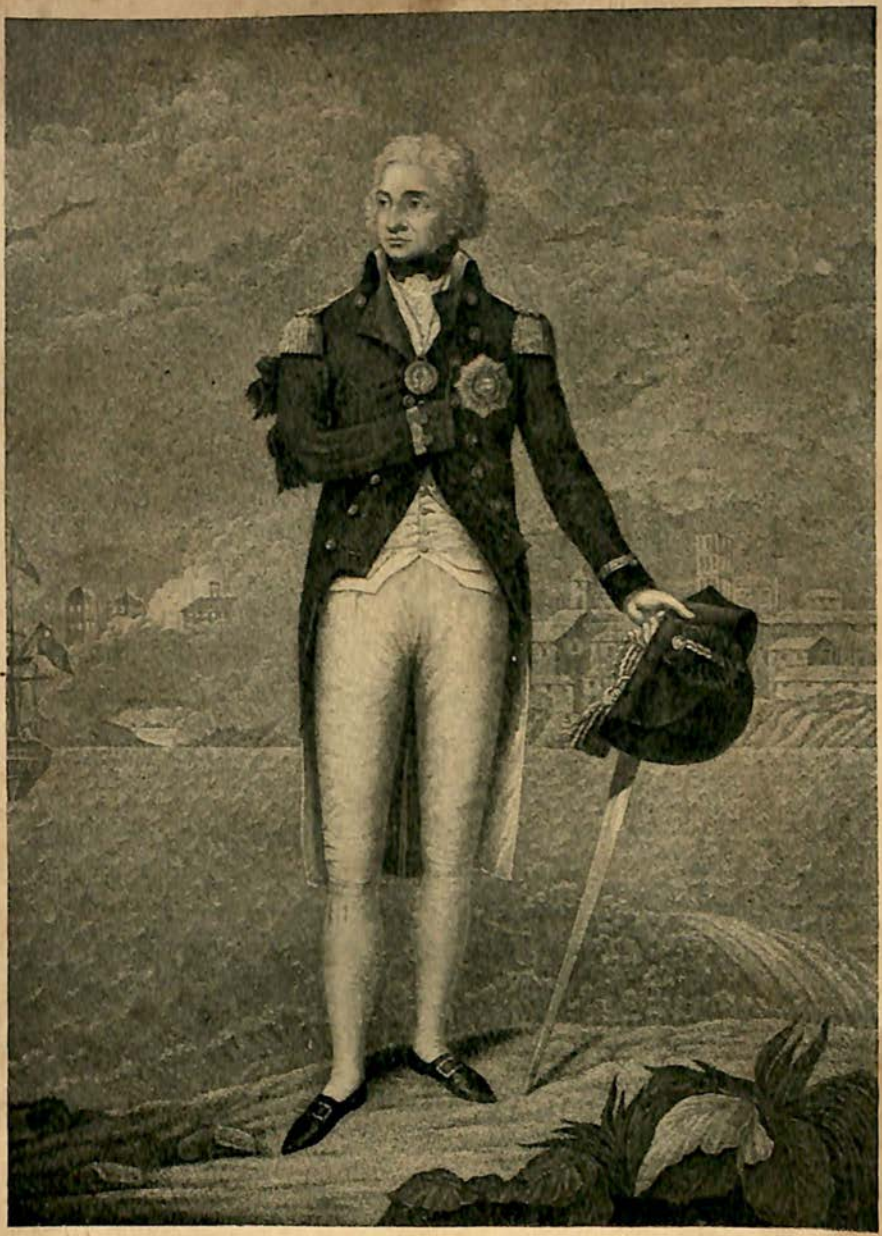
* *The Naval Miscellany*, Vol. II. Edited by Sir J. Knox Laughton, Navy Records Society.

which hung round his neck on a blue ribbon, and gave it to her with the words, "You will not value it less because Nelson has worn it."

While at Plymouth, Nelson called upon Troubridge's sister, who, he informed Lady Hamilton, with that crudity which sometimes characterised him, was pock-marked and as deaf as her brother, so there was no cause for jealousy. He found also, he says in another letter, "I have given great offence in not going to the Long Room last night; but my promise is solemnly made not to go to an Assembly till a Peace."

On the 21st of January he was at Exeter, where he was presented with the Freedom of the city—by this time he had a large collection of these trophies called Freedoms—and in reply to the Recorder's complimentary address made his usual modest little speech:

"Whatever merit may have been attributed to him in the Action of the Nile, it was only for having executed the orders entrusted to him; that those orders came to him from his Commander-in-Chief, who had received them from the Lords of the Admiralty. They were very concise: it was to take, burn, sink, and destroy the French Fleet wherever he should meet them, and he had only been the instrument employed to effect this service." He added that to the successful war with France "we owed the blessings we now experienced, in the enjoyment of our liberties, laws, and religion; and, although we might at



NELSON

From a German Stipple Engraving by E. Morace, 1799.

one day hope to be at peace with France, we must ever be at war with French principles."

Nelson's convictions were at once firm and simple—his cause and his country were a banner to him, and he was most deeply convinced that God fought on his side. All great warriors have had this faith; it is one cause of their triumph and is the strength behind their sword. Great and inspired seaman as he was, statesman as he proved himself in many tangled international affairs, Nelson was always marked by this simpleness of heart and faith. He believed that the cause of his country was Heaven's cause, and that most things French were wicked, as naturally as the marine in his flagship who wrote home to his sister, "So I shall leave you to judge how your country fights for the religion you enjoy, the laws you possess, and on the other hand how Bounaparte has trampt them causes down in the places he has had concern with."

About this same time the Corporation of Plymouth voted Nelson their Freedom in a silver box, little guessing, good pompous people, that Nelson had written in a private letter, "I hate Plymouth." But he had some reason for his petulance, quite apart from the fact that he was inclined to hate any place where he could not be with his beloved Emma, for while at Plymouth he suffered from acute ophthalmia in his only remaining eye, with much pain and lack of sight. To Emma he wrote of his trouble: "My eye is very bad. I have

had the Physician of the Fleet to examine it. He has directed me not to write . . . not to eat anything but the most simple food; not to touch wine or porter; to sit in a dark room; to have green shades for my eyes—(will you, my dear friend, make me one or two ?—nobody else shall ;) —and to bathe them in cold water every hour. I fear, it is the writing has brought on this complaint."

But at this time there was something which distressed and shook him far more than his eyes, and that was his anxiety for Emma Hamilton in the imminent birth of their child—that child he so passionately loved, who went by the name of Horatia Nelson Thompson. Into all the mystifications which surrounded her birth it is hardly necessary to enter here. Her actual existence in this early spring of 1801 is the necessary fact —that, and the large part she henceforth held in the heart of Nelson. His situation, separated as he was both by distance and conventional barriers from the mother of his child, was a cruel one, and in no ordinary correspondence—affectionate as were his general letters to Lady Hamilton—could he obtain relief for his feelings and utterance of all his ardent and anxious heart. So the "Thompson" fiction was invented—Thompson supposed to be an officer in Nelson's flagship, his wife on shore under Lady Hamilton's special care and protection. Thus, under other names, they were able to express their own joys and fears, though,

as might be expected from Nelson's quick and excitable nature, the "Thompson" disguise at times wears very thin. One specimen of the letters may be given—a letter in which he wrote direct in his own name and person to the "Mrs. Thompson" who was really Emma:

"I sit down, my dear Mrs. T. by desire of poor Thompson, to write you a line: not to assure you of his eternal love and affection for you and his dear child, but only to say that he is well and as happy as he can be, separated from all which he holds dear in this world. He has no thoughts separated from your love and your interest. They are united with his; one fate, one destiny, he assures me, awaits you both. What can I say more? Only to kiss his child for him: and love him as truly, sincerely, and faithfully as he does you; which is from the bottom of his soul. He desires that you will more and more attach yourself to dear Lady Hamilton."

Before going to the Baltic to win the second of his three great victories, Nelson demanded and obtained three days' leave of absence to go to London "to settle some very important matters for myself." The principal of these important matters was to see Emma and, in secret, his little daughter, who had been put out to nurse with a Mrs. Gibson, who used to tell how, in later times, the Admiral "often came alone, and played for hours with the infant on the floor, calling her his own child."

The Hamiltons were at their new house in Piccadilly, which Emma had furnished handsomely by the sale of some of the valuable diamonds presented to her by the Sicilian Court. There is a document in existence in Nelson's handwriting setting forth the contents of the house and their value.

Records of this short visit of the Admiral's are found in Emma Hamilton's correspondence with Mrs. William Nelson. The day after his arrival she writes, "Our dear Nelson is very well in health. Poor fellow, he travelled allmost all night, but you that know his great, good heart will not be surprised at any act of friendship *of his.*" While she was writing this letter Nelson had gone to the Admiralty to see Evan Nepean, but was coming back to dinner, bringing with him his brother Maurice and Troubridge. During this short visit Nelson stayed at Lothian's Hotel, but spent all the time he was not at the Admiralty at the Hamilton's house in Piccadilly. The following morning Emma again writes, "Oh, my dearest friend, our dear Lord is just come in.. He goes off to-night and sails immediately. My heart is fit to Burst quite with greef."

From London, after this brief leave, Nelson posted to Portsmouth, and from there sailed in his flagship the *St. George* to Yarmouth. From Yarmouth, after a few days' preparation, he sailed for the North and that "Battle of the Baltic" which was to add new laurels to his name.

CHAPTER IX: HOME SHORES.

WRITING of himself at this time the Admiral had declared, "Nelson will be first if he lives," and he proved it fully at the battle of the Baltic, so that Lady Malmesbury's comment had much justification: "I feel very sorry for Sir Hyde, but no wise man would ever have gone with Nelson, or over him, as he was sure to be in the background in every case."

Nelson was kept in the north some months after the battle, though the cold climate was very trying to his delicate frame, so long used to Sicilian suns; but he had to wait till his successor could be appointed and sent out. To find such a successor was, as Earl St. Vincent told him, no easy task, "for I never saw the man in our profession, excepting yourself and Troubridge, who possessed the magic art of infusing the same spirit into others which inspired their own actions."

When at last Nelson heard that he could return to England, he wrote to Lady Hamilton, "I was so overcome yesterday with the good and happy news that came about my going home, that I believe I was in truth scarcely myself. The thoughts of going do me good, yet all night I was so restless that I could not sleep."

On the 1st of July, 1801, he landed at Yarmouth and his characteristic first act was to visit the hospitals to cheer the Copenhagen wounded. A charming little account of this visit was given by a young doctor who was present, in a letter to Sir Walter Scott: "It was the Naval Hospital at Yarmouth, on the morning when Nelson, after the battle of Copenhagen (having sent the wounded before him), arrived at the Roads, and landed on the jetty. The populace soon surrounded him, and the military were drawn up in the market-place ready to receive him; but making his way through the crowd and the dust and the clamour, he went straight to the hospital. I went round the wards with him, and was much interested in observing his demeanour to the sailors; he stopped at every bed, and to every man he had something kind and cheery to say. At length he stopped opposite a bed on which a sailor was lying, who had lost his right arm close to the shoulder-joint, and the following short dialogue passed between them.

"Nelson: 'Well, Jack, what's the matter with you?'

"Sailor: 'Lost my arm, your honour.'

"Nelson paused, looked down at his own empty sleeve, then at the sailor, and said playfully: 'Well, Jack, then you and I are spoiled for fishermen; cheer up, my brave fellow.' And he passed briskly on to the next bed; but those few words had a magical effect on the poor fellow, for I saw his eyes sparkle with delight as Nelson turned away

and pursued his course through the wards. As this was the only occasion on which I saw Nelson, I may, perhaps, overrate the value of the incident."

After this kindly and consoling visit to his wounded seamen, Nelson went on to London and made his report in person at the Admiralty. For a short space he again lodged at Lothian's Hotel, but soon joined the Hamiltons in Piccadilly. But London in July was hot and unrefreshing, so the whole party moved to more rural surroundings. Their first stopping-place was at Box Hill, where they put up at the picturesque Burford Bridge Hotel, with its pretty old garden lying under the slope of that hill from whose brow such wide-spreading vistas of earth and sky delight the vision. The room at the inn traditionally Nelson's is still shown—a low, rather dark little room, by reason of the trees outside, looking away from the gardens and towards the highway.

The next pilgrimage was to the Thames at Staines. "When our glorious Nelson," wrote Emma of this time, "came home ill and worn out with fatigue after the glorious Second of April, we thought it right to let him change the air, and often we therefore went for three or four days at a time to different places; and one of them was at the Bush at Staines, a delightful place, situated, with a good garden, on the Thames. . . . The company at Staines was Sir William and Lady Hamilton, the gallant Nelson, and the

brave little Parker, who after lost his life in that bold and excellent vigorous attack on Boulogne."

Lady Hamilton had invited the old Duke of Queensberry and Lord William Gordon to join the Staines party, and, unable to do so, they forwarded their regrets in mediocre verse, which yet shows an intimacy with the foibles of the group. Sir William's passion for fishing is satirised and his prosy desire to tell at length of "bites confirmed and doubtful nibbles"; so is the Reverend William Nelson's anxiety for an Archbishopric, and his love of "good eating and good liquor." His daughter Charlotte is referred to as Baby, "with her cheeks of rose, Her teeth of ivory, and eyes of sloes." But of Nelson—called "Henry"—and Emma the rhymes conclude—

"For thee and Henry, silent are our lays;
Thy beauty and his valour mock all praise."

From Staines Nelson wrote to Lord St. Vincent on the 12th of July, "I was so unwell with the pain in my stomach, that I have been forced to get again into the Country; and therefore have been obliged to make my apologies to Lord Hobart for not dining with him on Tuesday, and I hope his Lordship will forgive me. Large dinners truly alarm me."

Nelson was soon taken from this semi-rural idleness by the call of his country—national needs and dangers demanded his services. There was sudden fear of a French invasion: a somewhat idle threat of Buonaparte's, puzzled how to strike

effectively at the little defiant island and constantly baffled by the workings of English sea-power. Nelson was called upon to take command of the threatened coast, from Beachy Head to Orford Ness. He was not himself greatly concerned about the invasion scare: the tested seamen of that date held St. Vincent's sturdy belief: "I do not say the French can't come," declared that Admiral, with a twinkle in his eye, "I only say they can't come by sea." However, it was Nelson's duty and necessity to take all the reasonable precautions the national fears demanded. On the subject of the defence of the Thames, Nelson wrote a valuable paper, too long to quote, which he called "merely the rude ideas of the moment," and "only meant as a sea plan of defence for the City of London."

During this coast defence Nelson was constantly at or off the east coast ports of Sheerness, Deal, and Harwich. He was involved in service which was not exactly naval and not very congenial to him. He describes his doings to Lord St. Vincent in a letter from Deal, dated July 30th: "As I had arranged everything possible for me to do at Sheerness, I thought it best to set off for the Downs by the way of Faversham, as I wished to see Captain Becker on the subject of the Sea-Fencibles. I had previously sent Captain Shepard to desire that a Mr. Salisbury would meet me; as he was a person of respectability, rich (got it by the fair trade), and of great influence amongst the Seafaring men on that part of the coast, particularly about

Whitstable. I made him sensible of the necessity of our Ships, which were to be stationed off the Sand-heads, being manned. He thought if the Admiralty, through me, gave the men assurances that they should be returned to their homes, when the danger of the Invasion was passed, that the Sea-folk would go; but that they were always afraid of some trick: this service, my dear Lord, above all others, would be terrible for me: to get up and harangue like a Recruiting Serjeant! I do not think I could get through it; but as I am come forth, I feel that I ought to do this disagreeable service as well as any other, if judged necessary. I hoisted my Flag here this morning."

A week later he wrote again to St. Vincent on the matter of the Sea-Fencibles, taking those of Margate as his text: "The Sea-Fencibles of Margate, for instance, consist of 118 men, their occupation is pier-men belonging to the Margate hoys, and some few who assist ships up and down the River. These men say, "our employment will not allow us to go from our homes beyond a day or two, and for actual service:' but they profess their readiness to fly on board, or on any other duty ordered, when the Enemy are announced as actually coming on the sea. This, my dear Lord, we must take for granted is the situation of all other Sea-Fencibles: when we cannot do all we wish, we must do as well as we can."

A little picture of Nelson's energy and ability is given in a letter written by Captain Edward

Parker—that young officer to whom the Admiral was so deeply attached, and who was with him in this service—to Lady Hamilton:

"He is, thank God, extremely well and in good health. We got down to Sheerness very quick and well, and were received by the acclamations of the people, who looked with wild but affectionate amazement at him who was once more going to step forward in defence of his country. He is the cleverest and the quickest man and the most zealous in the world. In the short time we were at Sheerness he regulated and gave orders for 30 of the ships under his command, made every one pleased, filled them with emulation, and set them on the *qui vive*. How, what I feel when I reflect how warmly I am attached to so great and noble a patron! But I fear I am a little envied."

In the midst of these anxieties he proved himself, as always, susceptible to a kind word from a friend, especially if it was an old Norfolk friend like the Reverend Henry Crowe of Burnham, to whom he wrote at this time: "I felt such pleasure in being remembered by an old Burnham friend, that it is impossible to describe what thoughts rushed into my mind. The remembrance of you from my very childhood, of your many acts of civilities and kindnesses to me and to my dear father, will always make it pleasant to me to attend to any recommendation of yours." He begs, with another Norfolk friend in mind, that Mr. Crowe will present his "very kindest respects to good Sir

Mordaunt"—it will be remembered that Sir Mordaunt Martin led the celebrations in Nelson's native village of the victory of the Nile.

The letter next in date is marked "off Harwich," and so are several others; while in a letter to Lady Hamilton, from Sheerness, Nelson wrote: "I came from Harwich yesterday noon; not having set my foot on shore, although the Volunteers, &c. were drawn up to receive me, and the people ready to draw the carriage." Now this statement as to not having set foot on shore is somewhat damaging to the claim of that interesting old inn at Harwich, the Three Cups, to be the place where Nelson always stayed when at or off Harwich. It is true that Nelson was on the east coast from July to October of 1801, and that his letters do not always bear the place as well as the date, therefore he may have been at Harwich at some time later than his statement to Lady Hamilton. The *tradition* that he stayed at the Three Cups is at least worth something, even if it cannot definitely be proved, and adds interest to the quaint low room with its uneven floor, great beams, and dark walls panelled to the low ceiling, that Nelson is said to have used.

On August 11th the Admiral wrote to Lady Hamilton saying that as far as the middle of September, he was at the Admiralty's disposal, "but, if Mr. Buonaparte does not choose to send his miscreants before that time, my health will not bear me through equinoctial gales." He told

NELSON, BY SIR WILLIAM BEECHEY.

From an Engraving by Edward Bell after the Painting in St. Andrew's Hall, Norwich.

St. Vincent, "I require nursing like a child"—and well he knew the nurse he needed. He wished that Sir William and Emma would come to either Deal, Dover, or Margate, "for, thus cut off from the society of my dearest friends, 'tis but a life of sorrow and sadness." The petulance of his ill-health breaks out: "The Mayor and Corporation of Sandwich, when they came on board to present me the Freedom of that ancient Town, requested me to dine with them. I put them off for the moment, but they would not be let off. Therefore, this business, *dreadful* to me, stands over, and I shall be attacked again when I get to the Downs. But I will not dine there, without you say, approve; nor, perhaps, then, if I can get off. Oh! how I hate to be stared at!"

Then a few days later came the attack on the French flotilla at Boulogne—the unsuccessful and disastrous attack, in which the life was lost, after long suffering, of one so dear to Nelson as Captain Edward Parker—the "dear Parker," "little Parker," about whom he wrote such piteous letters at this time, letters which could not have been more piteous and more poignant had his own son lain dying before his eyes; indeed, it was of Parker that he said, "He is my child, for I found him in distress." All the time that could be spared from his public duties Nelson passed at Parker's bedside in the hospital at Deal. Parker lingered for over a month, but there were other wounded in the attack on the Flotilla, and on the 18th of

August, three days after the engagement, he wrote: "I have this morning been attending the Funeral of two young Mids: a Mr. Gore, cousin of Captain Gore, and a Mr. Bristow. One nineteen, the other seventeen years of age. Last night, I was all the evening in the Hospital, seeing that all was done for the comfort of the poor fellows."

The simple unconscious words bring Nelson before us on that merciful errand, where the tenderness of his nature would have full scope, for he, like the "Happy Warrior" which was so largely a study of his character, though

"doomed to go in company with Pain,
And Fear, and Bloodshed, miserable twain!
Turns his necessity to glorious gain;
In face of these doth exercise a power
Which is our human nature's highest dower."

We see him with his worn, sensitive face and spare frame, moving between the narrow beds, and how his look and word would brighten even the face of pain. All that he had suffered himself and seen others suffer had not hardened him, only made him

"more able to endure
As more exposed to suffering and distress;
Thence, also, more alive to tenderness."

The *Naval Chronicle* says of the funeral of these midshipmen: "Lord Nelson followed their bodies to the ground with eight Captains of the Navy, preceded by a file of Marines, who fired three vollies over the place of their interment; an

immense crowd of spectators were present to witness this last tribute of respect to the memory of two gallant young Officers, who were an ornament to that Profession in which they so nobly fell. His Lordship was sensibly affected during the funeral, and was seen to shed tears."

At the beginning of September Sir William and Lady Hamilton paid their promised visit to the Admiral, which, as he said, "enlivens Deal." But even Emma's presence could not distract his thoughts from poor Captain Parker. "Parker suffers very much to-day," he writes at this time, "and I am very low." For a while, serious as were his injuries, Parker rallied, but it was only temporary, and on the 20th of September Nelson wrote to Alexander Davison: "You will join with me in affliction for the fate of dear good little Parker. Yesterday, at two in the afternoon, I was with him, so was Lady Hamilton, Sir William and Mrs. Nelson; he was so well that I was for the first moment sanguine in my hopes of his recovery; at 10 o'clock the great artery burst, and he is now at death's door, if not departed this life. You will judge our feelings; and, to mend all, Lady Hamilton with her party went to London this morning."

The next day the patient had rallied. "He has taken new milk and jellies," wrote poor Nelson eagerly; "there is a gleam of hope, and I own I embrace it with avidity." He wrote frequently to the surgeon, Dr. Baird, attending Parker, saying

in one of these notes, "With your nursing I have great hopes; and, let what will happen, great consolation from your abilities and affectionate disposition." To Parker's sister, on the news continuing good, he wrote:

"Lord Nelson from his heart congratulates Miss Parker on the happy prospect of her dear brother's recovery. Captain Parker will be, he hopes, for life, the dear son and friend of

"NELSON AND BRONTE."

And then, two days later, Parker died. Hearing the sad news, Nelson wrote to Dr. Baird:

"Although the contents of your letter were not unexpected, yet I am sure you will judge of my feelings—I feel all has been done which was possible: God's will be done. I beg that his hair may be cut off and given to me; it shall remain and be buried with me." When the hair was cut off and given to him as he desired, Nelson sent it in a little box to Lady Hamilton, saying he valued it more than if Parker had left him "a bulse of diamonds," and begging her to "keep some for poor Nelson." To Alexander Davison he wrote that he was told Parker's death was a happy release, "but I cannot bring myself to say I am glad he is gone; it would be a lie, for I am grieved almost to death." To Earl St. Vincent, who knew the merits of the young officer thus early cut off in his career, Nelson expressed his grief: "All will agree, none fell more nobly than dear Parker;

and none ever resigned their life into the hands of their Creator with more resignation to the Divine Will than our Parker. . . . I fear his loss has made a wound in my heart which time will scarcely heal."

As a sign of his appreciation of Dr. Baird's services, he presented him with what he called a "little remembrance of your goodness to a set of brave men," which took the form of a silver vase, bearing the inscription:

"Presented to Andrew Baird, Esq., M.D., as a mark of esteem for his humane attention to the gallant Officers and Men who were wounded off Boulogne on the 16th of August, 1801. From their Commander-in-Chief, Lord Viscount Nelson, Duke of Bronte."

He ordered that Parker's funeral should be carried out with all the honours possible. The coffin was carried by six captains, while Nelson himself was the chief mourner, accompanied by Admiral Lutwidge and Lord George Cavendish, and followed by a large number of officers of both Services. Captain Parker was buried at Deal, where he died, in St. George's churchyard. There is a tree in that churchyard against which Nelson is said to have leaned, with tears rolling down his face, as the solemn and beautiful words of the Burial Service were said over the open grave. As the Admiralty refused to be responsible for Parker's funeral and the expenses incurred during his illness, Nelson generously and characteristically took the

burden on his own shoulders. He also erected a monument over his grave which cost fifty pounds. As the words on this monument were without doubt chosen and sanctioned by Nelson, they are of special interest. The monument in shape is a cube engraved on two sides, and on the top—the inscription is difficult to read, owing to the moisture from the trees and the growth of moss, but the top of the tomb sets forth his name and the date of his death. The east side says that "This stone" is the "record of a Hero's fame"—

"Whose youth and valour glowed with virtues
A Nation bows with tears.
The flower of valour withered with its bloom."

The slight clumsiness of the sentences suggests that they are Nelson's own composition. On the south side it gives the date of his wounding, and concludes, "Terminated his career of glory 27 Sept. 1801."

The *Naval Chronicle* says of this gallant young man, who was only twenty-two when he died—so unfortunate in his untimely ending, so fortunate in the love Nelson had for him:

"His merits must have been large to have been raised to the rank of Master and Commander when scarcely 21 years of age, to have been distinguished so young in the annals of England in its most illustrious era, and above all to have been transmitted to posterity as the good and gallant friend and able assistant of the greatest of our Naval Heroes."

For several months after Parker's death Nelson sealed his letters with black wax.

While Nelson was in the Downs there was another great Englishman at Walmer Castle, and naturally those two met; indeed, tradition says that the Admiral dined and slept at the Castle more than once, which seems not improbable, though there is no actual proof, and Nelson had an invincible objection at this time to sleeping, or even dining, out of his ship if he could avoid it. However, in a letter of October 12th, to his "Dearest Friend," Lady Hamilton, there is this reference to Pitt: "This being a very fine morning, and smooth beach, at eight o'clock, I went with Sutton and Bedford, and landed at Walmer, but found Billy fast asleep, so left my card; walked the same road that we came, when the carriage could not come with us that night; and all rushed into my mind, and brought tears into my eyes. Ah, how different to walking with such a friend as you, Sir William, and Mrs. Nelson."

In a later letter he mentions that some of his officers are dining with "Billy Pitt," and that Pitt has "asked me to come and see him: and that I shall do, out of respect to a great man, although he never did anything for me or my relations."

At Walmer Castle the room is shown that Nelson is said to have used as a bed or dressing-room when he visited Pitt. It is a room nearly opposite the Duke of Wellington's, and is known as the Blue Room. A mahogany tall-boy chest of drawers

stands against one wall, the brass drop-handles of which all have the inscription "Sacred to Nelson." Also there is a canopied bedstead in which the Admiral is said to have slept, though we look in vain in the "Letters and Dispatches" for any reference of Nelson's own to having done so.

The little room where Pitt and Nelson are supposed to have conferred is now part of the drawing-room, into which it was thrown in later years. But in Pitt's day it had a separate entrance, and was not much more than a cupboard, without a window, where, by candle-light, national affairs could be secretly considered.

The pleasant, broad fortress of Walmer Castle, with its oasis of gardens and trees on a shingly shore, with its long curving passages and curious-shaped rooms, must have been an agreeable change to Nelson if he ever did sleep there, to say nothing of the companionship of the keen mind and deeply patriotic heart of William Pitt.

A somewhat curious landmark at Deal, which must have been familiar to the Admiral, as it was built in 1800 as a semaphore station, is the Time Ball House, still existing.

But by October Nelson was getting very sick of Deal—very fretted and angry at being kept by an unsympathetic Admiralty so needlessly long at his cold and trying post, when he was miserably out of health. Duty and danger, which were always so stimulating to his spirit that he forgot the weaknesses of his body, were withdrawn from

him by the signature of the preliminaries to the Peace of Amiens. The invasion danger was over for the time; there was no need that Nelson should continue to suffer from cold and sea-sickness, tossing in his flagship in the Downs. "Only two days more," he wrote to Lady Hamilton on the 20th of October, "the Admiralty could, with any conscience, keep me here; not that I think they have any conscience." He says he would have "got well long ago in a warm room, with a good fire, and sincere friends." In a characteristic sentence, "I am literally starving with cold; but my heart is warm."

His release came immediately after this, and he set off at once from the bleak airs of the Downs to the good fire that was to burn on his own hearth at Merton.

But we pause for a moment to consider that these three months from July to October of 1801 were the only time in his career that Nelson was called upon to defend his country on her very shores—where, in full view of the people he defended, as it were, he was sailing the "ruffled strip of salt" instead of distant seas. The frontiers of England are the enemy's coasts, but for once those frontiers drew closer than was common in the Great War; in consequence we have our Admiral fighting and watching at home instead of in the Mediterranean. A large part of this time his flagship was in sight of land; he dined and sometimes slept—though his sleepings are occasionally like those of Queen

Elizabeth, frequent and not authentic!—at the homely inns of the east coast ports and fishing towns. He landed on the beaches and addressed and inspected those somewhat awkward and refractory heroes, the Sea-Fencibles. It is war in its more humble and homespun guise, at the back of which we can hear the English mothers stilling their children with the terrors of "Boney's" name. It is war, moreover, in which Nelson met with his second and last reverse. Boulogne and Teneriffe! How dim their names are in remembrance, how eclipsed by all the triumphs! The homeliness of the time is maintained in the quaint story of the old seaman at Greenwich Hospital, who, reading the account of the attack on the Boulogne Flotilla, signed "Nelson and Bronte," asked another ancient mariner if he knew "who this Bronte is that Nelson has got hold on?" "No, I don't," was the reply. "All I can say is that I think he's a damned fool, begging his pardon, for taking a partner: for, depend upon it, nobody will ever do so well as Nelson himself."

CHAPTER X: "PARADISE MERTON."

THE time had at last come when Nelson was to realise his life-long dream—the constant theme of his letters and his longings—a home that was his own. The "neat cottage" had necessarily expanded into something more befitting the position and dignities his valour had won him. It is true he had earlier purchased another home, Roundwood, near Ipswich, but he had only purchased, not lived in it before his departure for the Mediterranean and the Nile, and when he returned to England the estrangement between him and Lady Nelson was so nearly complete that Roundwood was no home to him.

In truth, he had only two homes on English soil —his father's simple Parsonage House at Burnham Thorpe where he was born and which he always loved, and that last cherished abode of his at Merton Place in Surrey, which was so much to him, though his to enjoy for so short a time. At Merton his heart lived in his last sacrifice at sea; from Merton he set forth to his last battle and his last triumph.

The first allusion to Merton in Nelson's correspondence is in a letter to Alexander Davison from Deal, dated August 31st, 1801. "I am after

buying a little Farm at Merton," he says, "the price £9000; I hope to be able to get through it. If I cannot, after all my labour for the Country, get such a place as this, I am resolved to give it all up, and retire for life." Davison, with his usual generosity, offered to help the Admiral in this purchase, and in thanking him for this offer Nelson confessed it would take every farthing he had in the world, his debts, he said, had been so great: "The Baltic expedition cost me full £2000. Since I left London it has cost me, for Nelson cannot be like others, near £1000 in six weeks. If I am continued here, ruin to my finances must be the consequence, for everybody knows that Lord Nelson *is* amazingly rich!"

The real trouble was that everybody knew that Lord Nelson was amazingly generous.

Owing to professional duties and what he frankly regarded as Admiralty meanness, Nelson was unable to look for the home he wanted himself—"As Troubridge and the Earl are so cruel as to object to my coming to London to manage my own affairs"—so he had to delegate the choice to another, and naturally it was in Lady Hamilton's hands he placed the affair on which his hopes were set. It was to be his home and hers: she should choose and furnish it, for any choice that pleased her would be good to him. He had apparently abandoned Norfolk as a region of residence; distance, for one thing, was against it. Instead, he wanted a place about ten miles from

London. A house at Turnham Green was first considered, and Nelson urged its purchase, so eager was he for a home, for, as he said, "It is very extraordinary, but true, that the man who is pushed forward to defend his country has not in that country a place to lay his head in."

Merton Place and the "little Farm" attached did not actually cost Nelson so much as he had estimated to Davison, for in the general depression of property before the preliminaries to the Peace of Amiens were known, it was purchased for about six thousand pounds. The whole affair was left to Lady Hamilton's management, both the choice of the place and its furnishing: "How often have I said laughing," wrote Nelson to her "that I would give you £500 to furnish a house for me; you promised me, and now I claim it. I trust to your own dear good heart for the fulfilment of it." He hoped "the farm" would make her happier than "a dull London life. Make what use you please of it. It is as much yours as if you bought it."

It may be imagined with what hearty joy and enthusiasm Emma Hamilton would throw herself into this business, so delightful to her. The purchasing of furniture, carpets, curtains, ornaments, the lavish expenditure of money, the thought that she was doing it all for the "glorious Nelson," the exercise of her considerable capacity for "affairs," and the woman's innate feeling for home-making—all would appeal to her and rouse

her to great efforts. And it was not only in the house she worked and planned; the farm came under her supervision; she bought fowls and pigs, stocked the little stream—to be known as the "Nile"—with fish and procured a boat for it. A picture of her activities is given to Nelson by Sir William Hamilton, who seems to have been a calm and amused spectator of all these doings:

"I have lived with our dear Emma several years, I know her merit, have a great opinion of the head and heart God Almighty has been pleased to give her, but a seaman alone could have given a fine woman full power to choose and fit up a residence for him, without seeing it himself. You are in luck, for on my conscience, I verily believe that a place so suitable to your views could not have been found and at so cheap a rate. For, if you stay away three days longer, I do not think you can have any wish but you will find it compleated here. . . . The proximity to the Capital and the perfect retirement of this place are for your Lordship two points beyond estimation; but the house is so comfortable, the furniture clean and good, and I never saw so many conveniences united in so small a compass. You have nothing but to come and to enjoy immediately. You have a good mile of pleasant dry walk around your farm. It would make you laugh to see Emma and her mother fitting up pigstyes and hencoops, and already the canal is enlivened with

MERTON PLACE, SURREY.

From a Print in the possession of Admiral Sir Wilmot Fawkes.

ducks, and the cock is strutting with his hen about the walks."

All these details rejoiced Nelson's heart while he was fretting in the Downs. He loved every pig and fowl about the place, and said he would get a book on farming. The farm creatures were to have happy lives. "I expect, that all animals will increase where you are," Nelson wrote to Emma in one of his letters, "for I never expect that you will suffer any to be killed." He told her, "I assure you, my dear friend, that I had rather read and hear all your little story of a white hen getting into a tree, an anecdote of Fatima, or hear you call— 'Cupidy! Cupidy!' than any speech I shall hear in parliament." She was, he said, to be "Lady Paramount of all the territories and waters of Merton." He is quite sure that she has "as fine a taste in laying out the land," as she had in music. Everything she did was efficient and good in his eyes.

Before he had himself seen Merton he began gathering up his possessions to send there, and there is something feminine and touching about the details: "I send by the coach a little parcel containing the keys of the plate-chest and the case of the tea-urn, and there is a case of Colebrook Dale breakfast set and some other things." "I have sent in the parcel by the coach this day, two salt-cellars and two ladles, which will make four of each, as two are in the chest. You will also find spoons and forks sufficient for the present.

If sheets are wanting for the beds, will you order some and let me have the bill ? "

Then at last the great day came when he was free to go to Merton, to behold for the first time the home which had been planned and arranged and beautified for him by the woman he loved; where he and she and her elderly husband were to live under one roof again, as they had lived at Palermo. The figure of Sir William Hamilton, though so much in the background in the Merton chronicles, was useful, as it gave the curious household—to which was added later the infantile Horatia—the necessary veneer of propriety. Nelson, who had so defied them abroad, seems at this time to have clung to all those ideals which had been taught him at Burnham Thorpe, and with that curious pathetic blindness of humanity he resolutely shut his eyes to certain aspects of his love for another man's wife. " Have we a nice church at Merton ? " he asked Emma, " We will set an example of goodness to the under parishoners." At this " nice church " a plain oak seat without a back is preserved, being the seat he preferred to the shut-in pews. He longed for retirement and domestic peace: " No person there can take amiss our not visiting. The answer from me will always be very civil thanks, but that I wish to live retired. We shall have our sea friends; and I know Sir William thinks they are the best."

These officers themselves had pleasant antici-

pations of Merton visits: Hardy declared he had not lost his appetite, and Captain Gore and Captain Sutton looked forward to the luxury of brown bread and butter after sea fare.

But before either Nelson or his officers had enjoyed the comforts of Merton, the Admiral's father wrote him the following letter from Burnham:

"As a public character I could be acquainted only with what was made public respecting you. Now in a private station possibly you may tell me where it is likely your general place of residence may be, so that sometimes we may have mutual happiness in each other. . . . Most likely the winter may be too cold for me to continue here, and I mean to spend it between Bath and London. If Lady Nelson is in a hired house and by herself, gratitude requires that I should sometimes be with her, if it is likely to be of any comfort to her. Everywhere age and my many infirmities are very troublesome, and require every mark of respect. At present I am in the Parsonage; it is warm and comfortable. I am quite by myself, except the gentleman who takes care of the churches. He is a worthy, sensible, sober man, and, as far as rests with him, makes me very happy. I cannot do any public duty, nor even walk to the next house. But, my dearest son, here is still room enough to give you a warm and a joyful and affectionate reception, if you could find an inclination to look once more at me in Burnham Parsonage."

Nelson made some memorandum for reply to this letter, in which he said: "I am thinking of writing my poor old father to this effect: that I shall live at Merton with Sir W. and Lady Hamilton; that a warm room for him and a cheerful society will always be happy to receive him; that nothing in *my conduct* could ever cause a separation of a moment between me and him, for that I had all the respect and love which a son could bear towards a good father; that going to Burnham was impossible."

To Lady Hamilton he wrote that if his father remained at Burnham he would die, that he was sure he could not stay at Somerset Street with Lady Nelson, so "Pray let him come to your care at Merton. Your kindness will keep him alive."

To Merton he himself came for the first time on October 22nd, 1801, driving down from London in a postchaise. He was received with a triumphal arch and with illuminations of the suburban village, that in those days was so pretty and green and rustic, with its flowery hedgerows and old houses, its inn and comfortable Georgian mansions. Merton Place itself, now vanished and built over, was a plain, spacious structure, two stories high, with a curious flat roof and tall windows—not beautiful, belonging to none of the gracious architectural styles, built of stucco, to all appearance, but surrounded by pleasant well-wooded grounds and adorned with a stream, a branch of the Wandle. There had been statues about the grounds when

Merton was bought, but these had been removed, as Nelson disapproved of them—whether for puritanic or artistic reasons is not stated! Apparently it was all that Nelson wished and hoped for, and there he spent some of his happiest and most completely satisfied days in England. Till his death, exactly four years after his entering its portals, whatever seas he sailed, whatever ports he sojourned at, his heart and his thoughts were always at Merton.

Nelson's first visitor was his aged father, who evidently met with the warm welcome and warm room which had been promised. From Bath, at the conclusion of his visit, he wrote to his "Dear Horatio": "The affectionate and kind manner in which you received and entertained me at Merton must have excited all those parental feelings which none but fond parents know; and having seen you safe through the perils which infancy, childhood, and even early years of manhood are exposed to, how must I rejoice to see so few impediments to as much felicity as falls to the share of mortals. What you possess, my good son, take care of; what you may still want, consult your own good sense in which way it can be attained. Strive for honours and riches that will not fade, but will profit in good time of need. Excuse my anxiety for what I esteem your real good."

A few days later, hearing that Nelson was buying a little more land, his father wrote again: "The

little addition you are likely to make to your landed property will, I hope, bring some further pleasure and domestic comfort, such as the real comfort of a private and independent life must consist of, and every event which you are so good as to communicate to me, which is likely to increase your happiness, adds a prop to my declining life, and the little incidents, even of a difference, which Lady Hamilton politely communicates to me are at all times very acceptable." Thus this serene and good old man pursued his quiet way. Other of his letters show that he was distressed by Nelson's open affection for Lady Hamilton and complete severance from his wife. But he ever believed the best of everyone, and such was his charity and wisdom that he judged no one. To the day of his death he kept up affectionate relations with his son and with his neglected wife.

Soon after his settling down at Merton, Nelson was drawn from the domestic privacy he so longed for to the duties and ceremonies inseparable from his rank. He took his seat as a Viscount in the House of Lords, being introduced by Viscount Hood and Viscount Sydney. The day after he seconded Earl St. Vincent in proposing that the "Thanks of this House be given to Rear-Admiral Sir James Saumarez, K.B., for his gallant and distinguished conduct in the Action with the Combined Fleet of the Enemy, off Algeziras." Nelson was roused to generous eloquence in praising the exploits and courage of his brother in arms. After this speech,

he wrote to Captain Sutton, "You will see my maiden speech—bad enough, but well meant—anything better than ingratitude. I may be a coward, and good for nothing, but never ungrateful for favours done me."

On the 3rd of November Nelson spoke again in the debate on the Preliminaries of Peace, agreeing with the opinion of Lord St. Vincent that the terms were both honourable and advantageous to England.

At this time, whenever he came up to London, either to speak in the House or for any other purpose, he always returned to Merton each evening—it being, he said, exactly one hour's drive from Hyde Park or the Bridge.

To Captain Sutton he wrote again on the 12th of November—on which day he spoke in the House of Lords in support of a Vote of Thanks to Lord Keith—telling him of some of his experiences:

"Yesterday was a fagging day: 150 dined at the London Tavern, and I, being the Cock of the Company, was obliged to drink more than I liked; but we got home to supper; and a good breakfast at eight this morning has put all to rights again. This day comes on the great Northern question. Lords Spencer and Grenville, and all that party, are to be violent: Tierney and Grey are bought, which shows that all the disinterestedness of man is only like the Fox and the grapes—sour when they cannot be got at. . . . I am glad the French Gun-boats are dished; for,

although it is Peace, I wish all Frenchmen at the devil. I have wrote about your kind letter to the Admiralty. I wrote to good Bedford yesterday; but yesterday was a busy day, between gardening, attending the House, and eating, drinking, and hurraing."

Then, a few days later, came Nelson's magnificent letter to the Lord Mayor of London, dated November 20, 1801, on the subject of the Battle of Copenhagen. The City had voted its thanks to Lord Keith and the Army and Navy for the campaign in Egypt—it had withheld those thanks for the Baltic. Nelson was roused to protest: "From my own experience," he wrote, "I have never seen, that the smallest services rendered by either Navy or Army to the Country, have missed being always noticed by the great City of London, with one exception—I mean, my Lord, the glorious Second of April—a day when the greatest dangers of navigation were overcome, and the Danish Force, which they thought impregnable, totally taken or destroyed by the consummate skill of the Commanders, and by the undaunted bravery of as gallant a Band as ever defended the rights of this Country.

"For myself, I can assure you, that if I were only personally concerned, I should bear the stigma, now first attempted to be placed upon my brow, with humility. But, my Lord, I am the natural guardian of the characters of the Officers of the Navy, Army, and Marines, who fought, and

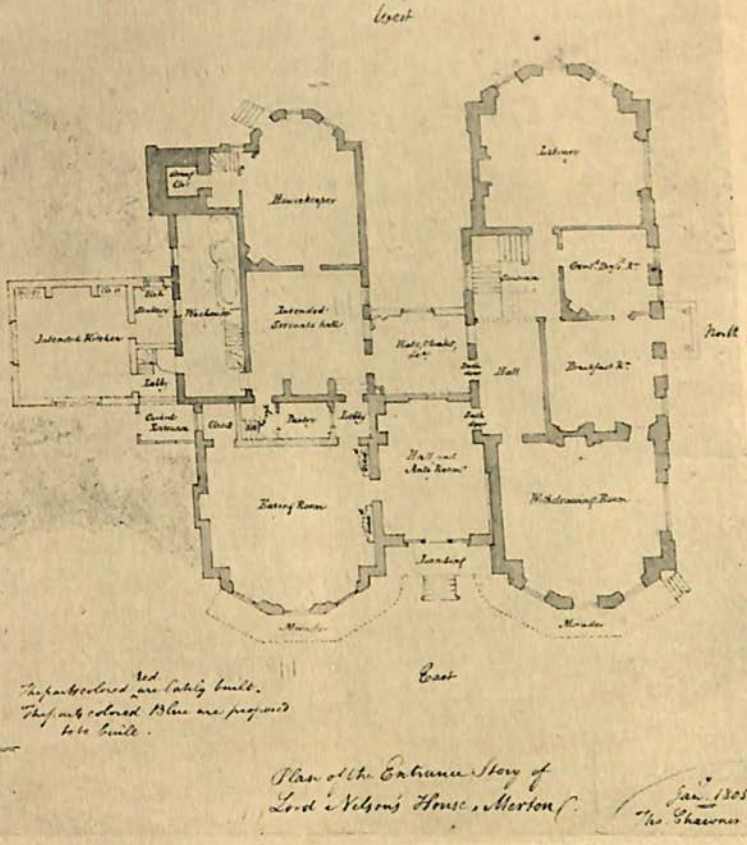
so profusely bled, under my command on that day. In no Sea-action this war has so much British blood flowed for their King and Country. Again, my Lord, I beg leave to disclaim for myself more merit than naturally falls to the share of a successful Commander; but when I am called upon to speak of the merits of the Captains of His Majesty's Ships, and of the Officers and Men, whether Seamen, Marines, or Soldiers, I that day had the happiness to command, *then I say*, that never was the glory of this Country upheld with more determined bravery than upon that occasion; and, if I may be allowed to give an opinion as a Briton, *then I say*, that more important service was never rendered to our King and Country."

Nelson also wrote to Lord St. Vincent, hoping that he would approve his letter to the Lord Mayor, for your "expanded mind must see the necessity of my stepping forth, or I should ill deserve to be *so* supported on any future occasion." But it appears that St. Vincent's "expanded mind" did not see the necessity, judging from his formal answer. Nelson was greatly grieved at this formality and the Lord Mayor's on a matter so near his heart, and declared passionately that he would never wear his other medals till that for Copenhagen was given, and would never dine with the Lord Mayor in his public capacity till the thanks of the City were granted.

In spite of Nelson's efforts and generous anger, the medals for Copenhagen were never given;

quibbles as to lapse of time and hurting the feelings of the Danish people being the inadequate reasons for its withholding. Nelson flung himself against official barriers, protested and besought in vain—"I am truly made ill," as he said, by the coldness in high quarters.

But these bitternesses and disappointments were temporarily forgotten in the Christmas festivities at Merton, which were sure, under Lady Hamilton's care, to be of a lavish order. The Reverend William Nelson and his wife were staying at Merton at the close of the year, rejoining their "jewel" of a daughter, Charlotte. Large parties, extravagant hospitality, were the rule, though Nelson had declared that it was "retirement with my friends, that I wish for." But "retirement" was not to Emma's taste at all; friends, lights, gaiety, profusion, was her natural setting, and she was happily convinced that what suited her must suit Nelson. She wrote to Mrs. William Nelson of the Admiral: "He *has* been *very, very* happy since he arrived, and Charlotte *has* been very attentive to him. Indeed we *all* make it our constant business to make him *happy.* Sir William is fonder than ever, and we manage very well in regard to our establishment, pay share and share alike, so it comes easy to booth partys. . . . We were all at church, and Charlotte turned over the prayers for her uncle. . . . Sir William and Charlotte caught 3 large pike. She helps him and milord



PLAN FOR THE ALTERATIONS AT MERTON PLACE.

In possession of Admiral Sir Wilmot Fawkes.

with their great *coats on*; so now I have nothing to do."

With his warm family feelings, it was always a pleasure to Nelson to entertain his nephews and nieces, his brothers and sisters and their spouses. Simple, affectionate, family intercourse was what he always cared for, little as he could have liked the large and miscellaneous crowd of singers, theatrical people, poets, and strangers that Emma delighted in gathering under his roof. Sir William Hamilton was roused to protest; the bills and expenses grew enormous. In the Morrison MS. are the Merton accounts, and the sums set down are very large. For one week in October in 1802 we find £7 paid to "Mr. Haines, Poulterer," £4 19*s.* 8*d.* to "Mr. Stinton, Grocer," and the same sum, less a few shillings, to "Mr. Coleman, Fishmonger." "Mr. Perry, Pastry Cook," is paid £10 10*s.* 9*d.*, while "Mr. Greenfield, Butcher at Merton," gets £8 12*s.* 10½*d.*, and "Mr. Stone, Brandy Merchant," £13 1*s.* 0*d.* It is true this is an exceptionally heavy week, but nevertheless it is a distinctly ironic comment on Nelson's earlier statement to Emma, "You will make us rich with your economies."

The simple, old-world father of the Admiral must have been a little bewildered by the lavishness of his son's home, but in a letter he wrote to Lady Hamilton in January, 1802, after his visit, we see him still going his serene, unshaken way—gentle, kindly, tolerant, thinking no

evil, content to accept and believe only what was good:

"Madam," he writes, "Your polite congratulations upon the entrance of a New Year, I return seven-fold to you, and the whole of the party now under the hospitable roof of Merton Place. Time is a sacred deposit committed to our trust; and, hereafter, we must account for the use we have made of it. To me, a large portion of this treasure has already been granted, even seventy-nine years. The complaint my dear son has felt is, I know, very, very painful: and can be removed, only, with much care and caution; not venturing, without a thick covering, both head and feet, even to admire your parterres of snow-drops, which now appear in all their splendour. The white robe which *January* wears, bespangled with ice, is handsome to look at; but we must not approach too near *her*. I shall be very glad to know the Lord of Merton is recovered. I am, Madam, your most humble servant,

"EDM. NELSON."

The indisposition from which the Admiral was suffering is probably the "swelled face" with which he says he has been laid up in one of his January letters.

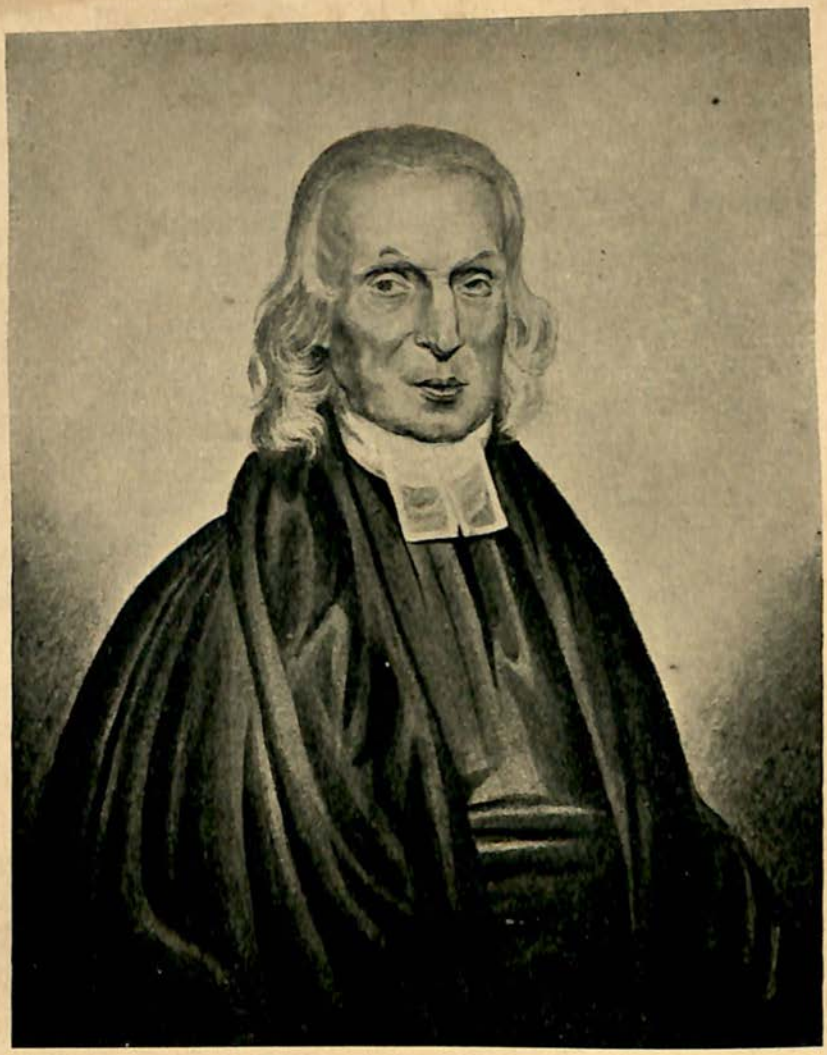
It had been Nelson's wish and hope that his father should spend the remainder of his years at Merton—Burnham winters he was convinced would kill him, and at Bath he was only a tem-

porary visitor. But before these plans could be matured, and while he was still at Bath, the gentle life of the Reverend Edmund Nelson came to its quiet close, in April, 1802. His favourite son "Horace," England's Admiral and always his dear child, was not with him when he died. There was some little warning of the end, but not sufficient for him to get to Bath. Nelson himself was unwell, and not only unable to go to Bath to take farewell of his father, but apparently too ill to journey into Norfolk to attend the funeral at Burnham Thorpe. The family were naturally more or less prepared for and resigned to the event, for the Rector was full of years, but for once, in Nelson's letters about his father's death, there seems something a little inadequate. He wrote to Mr. Matcham about the funeral arrangements at Burnham, saying it was his wish that his father should be buried from the Parsonage House "with all that respect and attention becoming His Excellent Life and the Worthy and Beneficent Pastor of His Parish for 45 years. No proper expense shall be wanting and beyond that is not necessary." He was not quite decided whether he would attempt to go to Burnham, as "my state of health and what my feelings would naturally be might be of serious consequence to myself."

The Rev. William Nelson was at Burnham, and superintended the funeral arrangements. For once in his life he seems to display more feeling than

his brother. "He has lived to a good old age," he wrote of his father, "and we must be thankful we had him so long; he has scarce left his fellow behind him." On the 12th of May he wrote to the Admiral: "We performed the last sad offices to ye remains of our dear and highly esteemed Father yesterday, amidst ye greatest number of people ever assembled here. I don't know any proper people were left out. I never saw a funeral conducted with greater regularity, silence, and respect." There were six bearers, and all the farmers in both parishes of Burnham Thorpe and Burnham Westgate attended. The Reverend Edmund Nelson was buried in the chancel of Burnham Thorpe church, where he had ministered and preached for nearly half a century, by the side of his wife. It was thirty-four years since she had left him, to take upon his shoulders, as he had long ago remarked, "the cares and responsibilities of double Parent." But those cares and responsibilities were all ended and he returned at last to the wife from whom he had been parted. On the wall of the chancel, above his grave, his children erected a marble monument, mounted on slate, bearing the inscription:

TO THE MEMORY OF
THE REVEREND EDMUND NELSON, A.M.
RECTOR OF THIS PARISH FORTY-SIX YEARS
FATHER OF
HORATIO FIRST VISCOUNT NELSON
OF THE NILE



THE REV. EDMUND NELSON.

From an Aquatint in the possession of Admiral Sir Wilmot Fawkes

DUKE OF BRONTE
WHO DIED APRIL THE 25TH 1802
AGED 76 YEARS.
THIS MONUMENT, THE LAST MARK OF FILIAL DUTY AND AFFECTION, WAS ERECTED BY HIS SURVIVING CHILDREN.

Above the inscription is an urn bearing the Nelson arms and the motto, "Palmam qui meruit ferat."

Thus quietly Nelson's father was laid to his rest in the remote Norfolk village. Little thought the mourners that the next Nelson to be buried would have a nation attending at his obsequies, instead of merely the "Farmers in both Parishes."

In a letter written from Burnham at this time, the Reverend William Nelson said: "I can't say but ye sight of the Place brings many pleasant things to remembrance, but then that is alloyed by ye reflection of what I am here for, and perhaps for the last time—at least for the last time one can call it *Home*."

So it was—that is the end of Burnham Thorpe in Nelson's intimate history. His father was buried there; the old Parsonage House, where he had been born and grown, was pulled down by the succeeding Rector, and though the Admiral is said to have once more visited the neighbourhood before his own death, virtually the place knew him no more, save as a distant and wonderful name that had somehow sprung from the quietness of Burnham fields.

But a little over three years of life remained to Nelson, and during those short years his heart's home was always Merton—his allegiance had swayed from Norfolk to Surrey. In the spring of 1802 he wrote from Merton, "where I have made a very small purchase, and live retired, although we live so near London; for I hate the noise, bustle, and falsity of what is called the great world."

There was much of his good father's simplicity and love of a quiet life in Nelson, though it had been largely overlaid by all the dazzling circumstances of his triumphs. But with the temporary Peace—"I am the friend of Peace without fearing War," he wrote at this time—and the possession of a home of his own, his really home-loving tastes appear. The home and the family, quiet gatherings, gossip of friends and relations, little details of house and farm, walks, small expeditions—these were the things he rejoiced in after his storm-tossed life. Merton was the haven of his heart.

But even at Merton we have a stray glimpse of Nelson in that irritable mood which occasionally overtook him. When, after the Peace of Amiens, Lieutenant Parsons found himself stranded on half pay with no chance of promotion, he went down to Merton hoping for powerful aid. But he found the Admiral in no humour to help, for once, and declaring that he was "pestered to death by young gentlemen, his former shipmates." This was disappointing, but wise Tom Allen,

Nelson's old sailor-servant, "went in search of an able auxiliary, who entered the study, in the most pleasing shape—that of a lovely and graceful woman; and, with her usual fascinating and playful manner, declared, 'His Lordship must serve me.' His countenance, which, until now, had been a thundercloud, brightened; and Lady Hamilton was the sun that lightened our hemisphere. She, with that ready wit possessed by the fair sex alone, set aside his scruples of asking a favour of the first Admiralty Lord, by dictating a strong certificate, which, under her direction, he wrote, 'Now, my young friend,' said her ladyship, with that irresistible smile which gave such expression of sweetness to her lovely countenance, 'obey my directions minutely; send this to Lord St. Vincent at Brentwood, so as to reach him on Sunday morning.' My commission as an officer was dated the same day as the aforesaid certificate." Thus the susceptible lieutenant, who had known Lady Hamilton at Palermo, tells his little tale.

Nelson's generosity to his relations was unfailing. To his sister Mrs. Bolton he wrote: "Here is £100, which I shall pay you on the 11th June, for three years, towards the education of your children; by that time, other things may turn up, and this is a trifle in case you may want any little thing going through London. All I desire is, that you would not say or write me a syllable on the subject, for I am sorry I cannot do more."

Of course, with his mind, his passionate interest

in national affairs, and his prominence in the public eye, Nelson's "retirement" could be only partial. The admiration and affection in which he was held is shown by the requests that reached him for his portrait. To one of these letters he replied: "There are so many prints of Me that it is not in my power to say which is most like the original, for no one of them is like the other, but I rather think a little outline of the head sold at Bryston's that it is the most like Me."

The "little outline" to which he refers is that drawn by De Koster from life on the 8th of December, 1800, soon after he first returned to England. It shows the left profile, and emphasises the characteristic traits of Nelson's countenance—the large and sensitive nose, the deep-set eye with its unhappy, visionary look, the drooping mouth that yet has something grim about it: the strange, familiar face.

At this time the City of London wished to thank Nelson formally for his services the previous year in guarding the coast against the threat of French invasion. Nelson would have none of the City's thanks, remembering the Baltic omission:

"This Battle, my Lord," he wrote to the Lord Mayor, "had not the honour of being approved in the way which the City of London has usually marked their approbation: therefore, I entreat that you will use your influence that no Vote of approbation may ever be given to me for any services since the 2nd of April, 1801; for I should

feel much mortified when I reflected on the noble support I that day received, at any honour which could separate me from them."

His feelings on this matter were strong and persistent. A little later he wrote to Alexander Davison: "I remember, a few years back, on my noticing to a *Lord Mayor*, that if the City continued its generosity, we should ruin them by their gifts, his Lordship put his hand on my shoulder and said—*aye, the Lord Mayor of London said*—'Do you find Victories, and we will find rewards.' I have since that time found *two complete Victories.* I have kept my word, and shall I have the power of saying that the City of London, which exists by Victories at Sea, has not kept its promise—a promise made by a Lord Mayor in his robes, and almost in the Royal presence?"

How many aspects Nelson presents to us in his manifold character—the hero, the inspired leader, the generous and unfailing champion of those who had fought with him, the quiet country gentleman walking about his estate, the faithful friend and helper, the passionate lover and breaker of marriage vows, and lastly, the man who was a child in the hands of a clever woman. This is the aspect that so painfully impressed Lord Minto when he visited Merton.

"The whole establishment and way of life," he wrote, "is such as to make me angry as well as melancholy; but I cannot alter it. I do not think myself obliged or at liberty to quarrel with

him for his weakness, though nothing shall ever induce me to give the smallest countenance to Lady Hamilton. . . . She goes on cramming Nelson with trowelfuls of flattery, which he goes on taking as quietly as a child does pap. The love she makes to him is not only ridiculous, but disgusting. Not only the rooms, but the whole house, staircase and all, are covered with nothing but pictures of her and him, of all sizes and sorts, and representations of his naval actions, coats of arms, pieces of plate in his honour, the flagstaff of *L'Orient,* etc., an excess of vanity which counteracts its purpose. If it was Lady H.'s house, there might be a pretence for it. To make his own a mere looking-glass to view himself all day is bad taste."

Perhaps, in making these severe remarks, Lord Minto did not know that practically Merton was Lady Hamilton's house—that she had chosen it and furnished it, that she had made it eloquent of Nelson's triumphs. Crude as were her emotions and her hero-worship, they yet were bold and generous. She saw Merton as the shrine of England's greatest seaman: with unflagging reiteration and enthusiasm she made it speak Nelson on every wall.

Nelson's nephew, the young George Matcham, who also frequented Merton, gives a different picture to Lord Minto of the Admiral's life there. "Lord Nelson in private life," he says, "was remarkable for a demeanour quiet, sedate, and

unobtrusive, anxious to give pleasure to every one about him, distinguishing each in turn by some act of kindness, and chiefly those who seemed to require it most.

"During his few intervals of leisure, in a little knot of relations and friends, he delighted in quiet conversation, through which occasionally ran an undercurrent of pleasantry, not unmixed with caustic wit. At his table he was the least heard among the company, and so far from being the hero of his own tale, I never heard him voluntarily refer to any of the great actions of his life.

"I have known him lauded by the great and wise; but he seemed to me to waive the homage with as little attention as was consistent with civility. Nevertheless, a mind like his was necessarily won by attention from those who could best estimate his value. . . . in his plain suit of black, in which he alone recurs to my memory, he always looked what he was—a gentleman."

Another allusion to the "plain suit of black" occurs in John Horsley's *Recollections*, for his father remembered the Admiral thus attired going often to Moorfields Church to hear the singing charity girls.

Out of all these contradictory impressions of the people who knew him we have to make up our vision of Nelson, remembering that one so sensitive in temperament as he was would unconsciously be influenced to some extent by the people he was with, and thus certain traits would

be emphasised or suppressed at different times. But the central unity of his character was never really altered by his many passions and moods —in every action and word he was essentially Nelson.

CHAPTER XI: TRAVELS IN ENGLAND.

NELSON knew his England fairly well, even though he spent so many years of his life at sea or in distant lands under more fervid suns. But there were few English seaports he had not known, from little Wells in Norfolk to Portsmouth and Plymouth. Long journeys by coach or "post" must have made certain aspects of eastern and southern England very familiar to him. The pace of even the swiftest horses leaves time for hedgerows and villages and blue horizons to sink into the mind, to greet the returning traveller with looks of sweet familiarity and remembrance. That Nelson was susceptible to these impressions many allusions show—little things were ever part of his happiness when he was most himself; and to him, as to all who have suffered exile, there was a kind of rareness and preciousness about England.

His home county of Norfolk he knew very intimately, for he had not only his boyish time there but the years of half-pay when he was newly married. The long journey from Burnham Thorpe to London was apparently thought little of by him, and the journey from London to Bath. A story is told that on one of these occasions he asked the

Boots of the Pelican Inn at Newbury, where he was putting up for the night, "Can I get from here to London by water?" The answer given him was that he could go by the canal to Reading and then on by the Thames to London. It is not recorded that the Admiral tried this slow and watery manner of moving about his native land.

In the days when horses were the only means of getting from place to place people seem to have journeyed freely and taken small count of a few hundred miles. Pleasure journeys were frequent, aged and ailing people went long distances to drink healing waters, and the only trouble seems to have been the wicked "velocity" of the most up-to-date coaches.

In the summer of 1802 Nelson and the Hamiltons planned some considerable travels. Sir William Hamilton wished to visit the property at Milford in Wales, and there were other places and people by the way it would be pleasant to visit. So on the 9th of July they started. Box Hill was the first resting place, and at the top of a letter written there at 7 o'clock on that summer's evening Nelson, evidently in high spirits, put "A very pretty place, and we are all very happy."

It was a large party, for the Reverend William Nelson, with his lively little wife and their son Horatio, were also with them, while at Oxford the cavalcade was joined by the Matchams—dinner being ordered at the Star Inn at five o'clock for a party of eight. But Nelson never could have

too much of his relations, though he was easily rendered irritable by the presence of strangers. At Oxford—whose grey haunts of learning and of peace were so far removed from every circumstance of Nelson's life—the Admiral was made a Freeman and a Doctor of Civil Law. The same academic distinction was also bestowed on Sir William Hamilton. From Oxford the party made an expedition to Blenheim, where they met with an unpleasant rebuff, for the Duke of Marlborough, instead of inviting them to lunch, sent refreshments to them in the park, of which they refused to partake. Probably it was the presence of Lady Hamilton with Nelson that caused this discourteous behaviour to the hero of his country. But it was the one untoward incident in a journey that developed into a triumphal progress. From Oxford the party went to Gloucester—where George and Catherine Matcham and their son left them to proceed to Bath—from Gloucester to Ross, and so on to Monmouth, Caermarthen and Milford. After inspecting the property at Milford, which was managed by Sir William's nephew Greville—a man whom Nelson never liked, though apparently he had no suspicion of his earlier connection with Emma Hamilton in the days when she was a penniless girl—they went on to Swansea, where Nelson was received "with every mark of distinction." To show how pleased the Admiral was with his reception the Portreeve printed the following paper:

"To the Corporation and Inhabitants of Swansea, and of the Neighbourhood, at the particular instance and request of Lord Nelson. I have the honour to communicate to you his Lordship's most grateful and sincere thanks for his flattering reception amongst you, and to assure you that the favours you have conferred upon him will never be effaced from his memory—that the remembrance of them will descend with him to his grave. That he feels the distinguished marks of regard and applause not so much on his own account as for what an example of their being so bestowed on him might afford to the rising generation. 'That their endeavours to serve their Country and probably to succeed in it, as he had been flattered, had fallen to his lot, would be as amply encouraged and rewarded, and their names recorded with posterity, amongst those who had deserved well of it.'"

At Monmouth he made a speech at a public dinner, and some characteristic sentences must be quoted: "In my own person," said the Admiral, standing slender and erect, so thin and worn in aspect, so dauntless in heart, "In my own person I have received an overflowing measure of the Nation's gratitude—far more than I either merited or expected; because the same success would have crowned the efforts of any other British Admiral, who had under his command such distinguished Officers and such gallant Crews. And here let me impress it on the mind of every

BUST OF NELSON BY L. GAHAGAN, BATH, 1804.

Officer in the Service, that to whatever quarter of the Globe he may be destined, whether to the East or West Indies, to Africa, or America, the eyes of his Country are upon him; and so long as Public men, in Public stations, exert themselves in those situations, to fulfil the duty demanded from them by the Public, they will always find the British Nation ready to heap upon them the utmost extent of its gratitude and its applause."

That statement about the "eyes of his Country" being upon the young officer in distant seas, recalls an early vision of Nelson's when "the sudden glow of patriotism" was kindled within him and a "radiant orb" suspended before his mind's eye. Indeed, it was during this very tour, while at Downton Castle in Herefordshire, that he confided to a friend his boyish exaltation. It was not unnatural that in the midst of this triumphal progress, at the apex of his fame, when it might seem that all his battles were won and peace his future portion, his thoughts should turn backwards to those early days when he was obscure and struggling, thirsting after glory, untested in the great crucible of war.

One of the episodes of this tour was Nelson's visit to the "Naval Temple" on the summit of Kymin Hill. "It was not only one of the most beautiful places he had ever seen," said the Admiral, "but, to the boast of Monmouth, the temple was the only monument of the kind erected to the English Navy in the whole range of the

Kingdom." The view that Nelson looked on is certainly a wonderful one, stretching into many "coloured counties," and overlooking the lovely district of the Wye. Perhaps he, like Wordsworth, may have owed to that river "In hours of weariness, sensations sweet, Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart"—little as it is likely that he had read the poem which was written and published in his great year of the Nile.

From Monmouth the Hamilton-Nelson party journeyed back to Ross, from Ross to Hereford, Ludlow, and Worcester, and then by Birmingham, Warwick, and Coventry back to Merton and home. A very considerable round, as will be seen. Scattered episodes emerge: Nelson was greeted by melodious bells wherever he moved; stately cathedral or humble village church saluted him in that heart-uplifting manner. In the churchwarden's accounts of St. Mary's, at Warwick, is this entry: "Gave the ringers for ringing for Lord Nelson at Warwick by order of the Mayor £1 1 0." Whenever he crossed a county boundary he was received and escorted by the yeomanry, very loyal and vigorous and beaming, presenting arms in a cheerful and awkward manner. Triumphal arches sprang out of the ground, and his carriage was constantly unhorsed, while the populace proudly drew the seaman who had fought and bled for them. When he sailed upon the Wye the banks were lined with people eager to gaze upon him. Towns and cities clamoured that he

would accept their Freedoms, till he was burdened with the weight of valuable boxes that accompany that honour. He went to the play at Birmingham, and medals were struck to commemorate that event, while his carriage was escorted to the play-house by a multitude of torch-bearers. The special object of this tour was, of course, the inspection of Sir William Hamilton's estate at Milford and the harbour improvements. This coincided with the anniversary of the Battle of the Nile, and was celebrated by a great dinner to all the important people of the neighbourhood, where Nelson, as was expected of him, duly made a speech, referring, among other things, to the magnificence of Milford Haven. He also laid the foundation stone of a church there.

At the Castle Hotel, Llandovery, he asked if anyone had his portrait, and when one was presented to him he wrote his name and the date on the back: "Nelson & Bronte, Llandovery, July 28th, 1802."

An interesting little episode of this time which has never seen print is that Nelson asked his old comrade of the Nile, Captain Foley, who had joined the party at Milford Haven, to ride over to Ridgeway, the residence of his elder brother, John Halbert Foley, and propose a visit from them. Captain Foley did so, and at first found his brother's wife very unwilling to receive the too-notorious Lady Hamilton, but this objection was over-ruled, and the Nelson-Hamilton party

arrived and stayed several days at Ridgeway. They were received with illuminations, the avenue and house being lit up with lanterns and all the candles which Haverford West, the nearest town, could supply. The eldest daughter of Mr. Foley was a child of about six years old, and when she was brought down to dessert on the evening of Nelson's arrival, was much struck with the gentleman with one eye and one arm, but she got over her astonishment when the Admiral took her on his knee and dropped grapes into her mouth with his *one* hand! * Probably he was thinking of his baby Horatia as he did so.

And then at last, after all this visiting, acclamation, and excitement, the party returned to Merton in September. Emma Hamilton took up her pen to tell Davison of the triumph and the general confounding of all who, like the Marlboroughs, did not hasten to pay Nelson homage: "We have had a most charming Tour which will Burst *some of* THEM," she exclaims violently. "So let all the enimies of the GREATEST man alive! And bless his friends." To Nelson's sister, Mrs. Matcham, she wrote, "Oh how our Hero has been received. I wish you could come to hear all our Story, most enteresting."

At this time the Matchams were contemplating coming to live somewhere within reach of Merton; a house at Streatham, with thirty acres

* I am indebted for this interesting little glimpse to Miss H. Vernon, whose mother was that little girl, daughter of Mr. John Foley.

of land, had been thought of, and then another at Epsom, which Nelson and Lady Hamilton went to look at on their behalf, but eventually these plans fell through. It was not till the year after Nelson's death that George Matcham purchased his beautiful Sussex home of Ashfold Lodge.

One written remembrance of Nelson's tour is the memoranda he put down respecting the Forest of Dean, where his agricultural and his naval interests met and mingled.

"The Forest of Dean," he wrote, "contains about 23,000 acres of the finest land in the Kingdom, which, I am informed, if in a high state of cultivation of oak, would produce about 9,200 loads of timber, fit for building Ships of the Line, every year—that is, the Forest would grow in full vigour 920,000 oak trees. The state of the Forest at this moment is deplorable; for, if my information is true, there is not 3,500 load of timber in the whole Forest fit for building, and none coming forward . . . where good timber is felled, nothing is planted, and nothing can grow *self* sown; for the deer (of which now only a few remain) bark all the young trees. Vast droves of hogs are allowed to go into the woods in the autumn; and if any fortunate acorn escapes their search, and takes root, then *flocks* of sheep are allowed to go into the Forest, and they bite off the tender shoot. These are sufficient reasons why timber does not grow in the Forest of Dean.

" Of the waste of timber, in former times, I can say nothing; but of late years, it has been, I am told, shameful. Trees cut down in swampy places, as the carriage is done by contract, are left to rot, and are cut up by people in the neighbourhood. Another abuse *is the* Contractors, as they can carry more measurement, are allowed to cut the trees to their advantage of carriage, by which means the invaluable crooked timber is lost for the service of the Navy. . . . If the Forest of Dean is to be preserved as a useful Forest for the Country, strong measures must be pursued. First, the *Guardian* of this support of our Navy, must be an intelligent honest man, who will give up his time to his employment: therefore, he must live in the Forest, have a house, a small farm, and an adequate salary. I omitted to mention that the expense of a Surveyor of Woods, as far as relates to this Forest, to be done away: *Verderer*, as at present, also. The Guardian to have proper Verderers under him who understand the planting, thinning, and management of timber trees. These places should be so comfortable that the fear of being turned out should be a great object of terror, and, of course, an inducement for them to exert themselves in their different stations. The first thing necessary in the Forest of Dean is to plant some acres of acorns; and I saw plenty of *clear fields* with *cattle* grazing in my voyage *down* the Wye. In two years, these will be fit for transplanting. . . . I am sensible that

what I have thrown together upon paper is so loose, that no plan can be drawn from it; but if these facts, which I have learnt from my late tour, may be in the least degree instrumental in benefiting our Country, I shall be truly happy."

This paper was communicated to the Prime Minister, and was followed by:

"A few Thoughts on encouraging the Growth of Oak Timber, drawn from conversations with many gentlemen in my late tour:

"First, The reason why timber has of late years been so much reduced has been uniformly told me, that, from the pressure of the times, gentlemen who had £1000 to £5[000] worth of timber on their estates, although only half-grown, (say, fifty years of age,) were obliged to sell it to raise temporary sums, (say to pay off legacies.) The owner cannot, however sorry he may feel to see the beauty of his place destroyed, and what would be treble the value to his children annihilated, help himself. It has struck me forcibly, that if Government could form a plan to purchase of such gentlemen the growing oak, that it would be a National benefit, and a great and pleasing accommodation to such growers of oak as wish to sell.

"My knowledge of this subject, drawn from the conversation of gentlemen in the oak countries, I think, would almost obviate all difficulties. Of myself, I own my incompetence to draw up a plan fit for public inspection; but all my gathered

knowledge shall be most cheerfully at the service of some able man."

Oak seems a natural subject for a sailor, but there is something amusing in Nelson's simple faith that his knowledge gathered from "the conversation of gentlemen in the oak countries" would be so useful to the Government. But these memoranda provide yet another link between him and Cuthbert Collingwood, who followed him step by step up the ladder of promotion and took over the supreme command at his death at Trafalgar. It was Collingwood who, when on shore, used to walk about with a supply of acorns in his pocket, which he dropped in hedges and fields, thereby seeing with the eye of faith fine timber for Ships of the Line springing from his humble acorns. He advised all country gentlemen to do likewise. To these heroic sailors the connection between sea power and forestry was evident and close for

"They shall ride
Over ocean wide
With hempen bridle and horse of tree,"

as Thomas of Erceldoune sang.

On his return, Nelson called first at St. James's Square to see his friend Alexander Davison, but finding him away at his Northumberland house, wrote to him from Merton: "We have had rather a longer tour than was at first intended, for Merton was not fit to receive us . . . the work went on so very slowly. It is not even yet finished. Our tour has been very fine and interesting, and the

way in which I have been everywhere received most flattering to my feelings; and although some of the higher powers may wish to keep me down, yet the reward of the general approbation and gratitude for my services is an ample reward for all I have done; but it makes a *comparison* fly up to my mind, not much to the credit of some in the higher Offices of the State."

In a letter of a week later to the same correspondent he says, "You are right about the country; for London seems absolutely deserted, and so hot and stinking that it is truly detestable." He adds that it is not impossible that next year they may make a northern tour, when they would have much pleasure in visiting Swanland House.

The Copenhagen slight was still strong in his memory, for when the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs requested the honour of his company to dine at the Guildhall on Lord Mayor's day, he declined; for, as he said, "Lord Nelson's sentiments being precisely the same, and feeling for the situation of those brave Captains, Officers, and Men, who so bravely fought, profusely bled, and obtained such a glorious, complete, and most important Victory for their King and Country, cannot do himself the honour and happiness of meeting his Fellow-Citizens on the 9th of November."

Nelson made this outstanding and continuous protest as part of the duty he owed his comrades-in-arms. Another part of his duty to his country which he fulfilled equally faithfully was speaking

in the House of Lords whenever questions of naval interest came up. One of these occasions was on the 21st of December in this year (1802) on the Bill for a Naval Inquiry. Nelson said:

"My Lords, in the absence of my noble friend who is at the head of the Admiralty, I think it my duty to say a few words to your Lordships in regard to a Bill, of which the objects have an express reference to the interests of my profession as a Seaman. It undoubtedly originates in the feeling of the Admiralty, that they have not the power to remedy certain abuses which they perceive to be the most injurious to the Public service. Every man knows that there are such abuses; and I hope there is none among us who would not gladly do all that can be constitutionally effected to correct them. Yet, if I had heard of any objection of weight urged against the measure in the present Bill, I should certainly have hesitated to do aught to promote its progress through the forms of this House. But I can recollect but one thing with which I have been struck, as possibly exceptionable in its terms. It authorises the Commissioners to call for and inspect the books of Merchants who may have had transactions of business with any of the Boards or Prize-agents into whose conduct they are to inquire. But the credit of the British Merchant is the support of the commerce of the world; his books are not lightly, nor for any ordinary purpose, to be taken out of his own hands; the secrets of his business are not to be

too curiously pried into. The books of a single Merchant may betray the secrets, not only of his own affairs, but of those with whom he is principally connected in business, and the reciprocal confidence of the whole commercial world may, by the authoritative inquiry of these Commissioners, be shaken. All this, at least, I should have feared as liable to happen, if the persons who are named in the Bill had not been men whose characters are above all suspicion of indiscretion or malice . . . and truly, my Lords, if the Bill be thus superior to all objections, I can affirm, that the necessities, the wrongs of those who are employed in the Naval service of their Country, most loudly call for the redress which it proposes. From the highest Admiral in the Service to the lowest cabin-boy that walks the street, there is not a man but may be in distress, with large sums of wages due to him, of which he shall, by no diligence of request, be able to obtain payment: there is not a man, whose entreaties will be readily answered with aught but insults, at the proper places for his application, if he come not with particular recommendations to a preference. From the highest Admiral to the meanest Seaman, whatever the sums of Prize-money due to him, no man can tell when he may securely call any part of it his own. A man may have £40,000 due to him in Prize-money, and yet be dismissed without a shilling, if he ask for it, at the proper Office, without particular recommendation. Are

these things to be tolerated ? Is it not for the interest—is it not for the honour of the Country, that they should not be as speedily as possible redressed ? "

Well might Lady Hamilton exclaim that he spoke " like an angel in the House of Lords " !

Christmas was celebrated at Merton with all the usual festivities and a large family gathering. " Here we are as happy as Kings and much more so," wrote Emma Hamilton, " We have 3 Boltons, 2 Nelson and only want 2 or 3 Little Matchams to be quite *en famille*, happy and comfortable, for the greatest of all Joys to our most Excellent Nelson, is when he has his Sisters or their Children with him ; for sure no brother was ever so much attached as he is."

Early in the New Year of 1803 the Hamiltons went from Merton to their house at 23, Piccadilly, which they still retained and occasionally used, and Nelson went with them, for besides his dislike to being parted from his " incomparable " Emma, there was much Admiralty and law business which demanded his presence in town at this time. His increasing loss of sight in his one remaining eye was a great trouble to him and anxiety to those who loved him. Writing was very bad for him, and he made use of his secretary Oliver to some extent; but his impulsive feelings demanded personal utterance, for as he wrote to Davison, " I have been, and am, very bad in my eyesight, and am forbid writing ; but I could not resist."

Early in April Sir William Hamilton died, worn out and older than his years, which were seventy-three. He was watched and tended to the last by his wife and the man who unlawfully loved her.

Nelson sat up with him for the last six nights of his illness, and when he died, wrote: "Our dear Sir William died at 10 minutes past Ten this morning in Lady Hamilton's and my arms without a sigh or a struggle." In all sincerity that was written, and not less so the faithless Emma's comment: "Unhappy day for the forlorn Emma . . . dear blessed Sir William left me." Yet the old man's death removed one "impediment" to the marriage which they both so desired. It is only another instance of the curious tangle and complexity of human emotions, which are so mixed of good and evil, of faith and falsehood. One thing is certain, that both Nelson and Emma had long ceased to regard Sir William as anything but a kind of father or uncle to them both—the considerable difference in age between him and his wife had helped to obscure the marital relation. What Sir William himself thought about it all remains an obscurer problem; possibly he was a little worn out with Emma's vagaries and enthusiasms, and did not much care the direction they took, provided he was allowed to follow his own antiquarian and literary pursuits; possibly he did not expect too much from the woman whose past was so far from irreproachable when he married her. Anyway, in his will he left a miniature of

Emma to " my dearest friend Lord Nelson, Duke of Bronté, a very small token of the great regard I have for his lordship, the most virtuous, loyal, and truly brave character I ever met with. God bless him, and shame fall on all those who do not say Amen."

Sir William's death in one way complicated an already somewhat involved situation. As Captain Hardy curtly remarked, " Sir William Hamilton died on Sunday afternoon, and was quite sensible to the last. How her Ladyship will manage to Live with the Hero of the Nile now, I am at a loss to know, at least in an honourable way."

This problem was temporarily solved by the fresh outbreak of war with France, when Nelson was given the Mediterranean command, for "Buonnaparte knows that if he hoists his flag it will not be in joke." Nelson's views on war had been shown in the noble words he spoke in the House of Lords the previous winter : " I, my Lords, have in different countries, seen much of the miseries of war. I am, therefore, in my inmost soul, a man of peace. Yet I would not, for the sake of any peace, however fortunate, consent to sacrifice one jot of England's honour. Our honour is inseparably combined with our genuine interest. Hitherto there has been nothing greater known on the Continent than the faith, the untainted honour, the generous public sympathies, the high diplomatic influence, the Commerce, the grandeur, the resistless power, the unconquerable valour of

SKETCH OF NELSON BY DE KOSTER.

the British nation. . . . It is satisfactory to know, that the preparations to maintain our dignity in peace, are not to be neglected. Those supplies which his Majesty shall for such purposes demand, his people will most earnestly grant. The nation is satisfied that the Government seeks in peace or war no interest separate from that of the people at large; and as the nation was pleased with that sincere spirit of peace with which the late treaty was negotiated, so, now that a restless and unjust ambition in those with whom we desired sincere amity has given a new alarm, the country will rather prompt the Government to assert its honour, than need to be roused to such measures of vigorous defence as the exigency of the times may require."

There speaks the statesman, the warrior who knew the bitterness and the cost of war. But we have the impulsive Nelson in a little story Addington, the Prime Minister, tells of him at this time. "It matters not at all," said the Admiral, picking up a poker from the hearth, "in what way I lay this poker on the floor. But if Buonaparte should say it *must* be placed in this direction," moving it as he spoke, "we must instantly insist upon its being laid in some other one."

At the outbreak of this renewed war Nelson had more to lose and to leave than ever before. Yet, as always, unfailing he responded to the call of his country. While warlike measures were being discussed in Parliament in March, Nelson,

convinced that war must come, left his seat in the Upper House and sent Addington this pregnant line, "Whenever it is necessary, I am *your* Admiral." He was more, as he surely knew, he was England's Admiral. "War or Peace?" he wrote to his old flag-captain Berry. "Every person has a different opinion. I fear perhaps the former, as I hope so much the latter."

On the 16th of May he received his commission as Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean. Just before this he had taken part in a private matter very near his heart, the christening of his infant daughter Horatia at Marylebone Church—the church where he always worshipped when in London. He and Lady Hamilton, the unacknowledged parents of the two-year-old child, stood together at the font as godfather and godmother of Horatia Nelson Thompson, as she was baptized. Nelson gave her on this occasion a silver cup.

Two other events of personal interest to the Admiral took place on the very day of his departure. One of these was the marriage of Captain Sir William Bolton to his cousin and Nelson's niece, Catherine Bolton, daughter of Mrs. Thomas Bolton. This wedding took place from Lady Hamilton's house in Clarges Street, where she had moved after Sir William's death, on Piccadilly proving beyond her means.

The other event in which Nelson was concerned, though he was unable to take part, was his in-

stallation as a Knight of the Bath, when this same Sir William Bolton was his proxy, as the Installation took place on the 19th of May, the day on which he sailed. His Esquires were his nephews, Horatio Nelson and Thomas Bolton, both of whom in succession were to be his heirs and inheritors of the titles of his valour. The Admiral had in person previous to this attended several Chapters and Conventions which were held to arrange the proceedings.

In the very early morning, four o'clock, of May 18th, the postchaise drew up before the door at Merton. In that still hour Nelson said his farewells to the woman he loved and the home that was dear to him, and drove off into the dawn. Fears and trepidations of heart he must have had, as all have who love; the pang of partings is always new and poignant. But happily it was hidden from his knowledge that he had practically reached the end of his dear domestic happiness, that the rest of his life held but a bare month of "Paradise Merton" for him, though many months at sea.

When he reached Portsmouth he found his feelings reflected in his surroundings. "Either my ideas are altered, or Portsmouth," he told Emma. "It is a place, the picture of desolation and misery, but perhaps it is the contrast to what I have been used to."

For the first time he hoisted his flag in the glorious and fatal *Victory*—that ship so imperishably linked with his name. He was very

anxious to sail, partly to escape from the Portsmouth he found so dreary, still more because of the patriotic ardour he always felt to serve England in time of need. To all who spoke to him of his sailing the day before he said, "I cannot before to-morrow, and that's an age." But "to-morrow" came, and on the 20th of May the *Naval Chronicle* said: "This morning, about ten o'clock, his Lordship went off in a heavy shower of rain, and sailed with a northerly wind."

CHAPTER XII: THE TWO YEARS' SACRIFICE.

AT every crisis of his and England's life—for they beat together—Nelson proved himself possessed of the lofty and antique virtue of the "Happy Warrior." Viewed in its greatest aspects, ignoring merely the one failing which to Wordsworth was so serious, that poem is the crystallisation of Nelson's character into its imperishable elements. In thus leaving his cherished home, so willingly and yet so sadly, at the call of his country, Nelson vanquished a greater pang than he had hitherto battled with. It was the first time in his later life that he had known the "homefelt pleasures" and the "gentle scenes" which had grown so dear to his craving heart. But when the need for sacrifice came

"such fidelity
It is his darling passion to approve;
More brave for this, that he hath much to love."

In act he was perfect, but in heart he could not now fully practice what Codrington said he used to preach, "that every man became a bachelor after passing the Rock of Gibraltar." It was no longer true that "Honour, glory, and distinction were the whole object of his life"—he had a horizon

beyond the sea-rim, and a hope beyond the desire to destroy the French; though it was true, as Codrington said, "That dear domestic happiness never abstracted his attention." How fully this was the case is proved by the fact that, from May, 1803, to August, 1805, he set foot outside his flagship but three times; none of those three times exceeded an hour, and even those brief absences were owing to unavoidable needs of the service. "I have not a thought," he told Emma, "except on you and the French fleet; all my thoughts, plans and toils tend to those two objects." His attitude is finely and simply expressed in a sentence of this time, "Whilst I serve, I will serve well, and closely; when I want rest, I will go to Merton."

His official letters to official personages and to brother officers give one side of his thought—the other, the intimate, tender side, is revealed in his letters to Lady Hamilton and near friends. Now that Emma was left a widow to the world she was more closely his. How he believed in her, how devoutly he admired her is shown constantly in his letters to her. In one of them he assures her, "In short, in every point of view, from Ambassatrice to the duties of domestic life, I never saw your equal! That Elegance of manners, accomplishments, and, above all, your goodness of heart, is unparalleled." In earlier years, as Queen Charlotte never would receive her, Sir William Hamilton had gone to Court without her —a proceeding of which Nelson, of course, dis-

approved: "You know that I would not, in Sir William's case, have gone to Court without my wife, and such a wife, never to be matched. It is true you would grace a Court better as a Queen than a visitor."

Thus perfection gilded all her faults to the love-blinded eyes of Nelson, and that merciful Trafalgar bullet saved him from the cruelty of disillusion, the disillusion which surely would have come with longer years.

But in 1803, in his great watch off Toulon, each tender and happy thought was for Emma and "Paradise Merton." His greatest joys were her letters with all their diligent gathering of gossip and trifling domestic detail—for she was a good and naturally vivid correspondent. In a letter to Alexander Davison of that same autumn the Admiral says: "I send a little parcel for Lady Hamilton, directed under cover to you. Pray, forward it to Merton, where I hope my dearest Lady Hamilton is well, comfortable, and happy. I hope next summer to be able to build the room, and I must write to Linton about the field, which I wish to have to make the new entrance, etc., etc., provided she stays to manage the improvements. I will admit no display of taste at Merton, but hers. She bought it, and I hope will continue to improve and beautify it to the day, at least, of my death."

Another letter of this time shows how constant were his thoughts of Merton: "This letter will find you at dear Merton," he writes, "where we

shall one day meet, and be truly happy. I do not think it can be a long war; and, I believe it will be much shorter than people expect: and I shall hope to find the new room built; the grounds laid out, neatly but not expensively; new Piccadilly gates; kitchen garden, &c. Only let us have a plan, and then all will go on well. It will be a great source of amusement to you; and Horatia shall plant a tree. I dare say, she will be very busy. Mrs. Nelson, or Mrs. Bolton, &c. will be with you; and time will pass away, till I have the inexpressible happiness of arriving at Merton. Even the thought of it vibrates through my nerves; for, my love for you is unbounded as the ocean! I feel all your good mother's kindness; and I trust that we shall turn rich, by being economists. Spending money, to please a pack of people, is folly and without thanks."

While Nelson was at sea Lady Hamilton lived at Merton, varying her solitude by the companionship of the Admiral's relations and visits to them in their various homes. "I long to hear of your Norfolk excursion," Nelson wrote to her, "and everything you have been about, for I am ever most warmly interested in your actions." While Nelson was still absent Emma paid a second visit to his natal county of Norfolk, staying at Bradenham Hall with the Boltons. "In or about the year 1804," says Sir Henry Rider Haggard, "Mrs. Bolton, who was Nelson's sister, and her husband hired Bradenham, my brother's house, where I

was born, and here Lady Hamilton used to visit them. Indeed, there is a large cupboard in the Red Room that was dedicated to her dresses, whereof the exceeding splendours are still recorded in the traditions of the village. At that time a man of the name of Canham, whom I knew well in his age, was page boy at the Hall, and more than once has he talked to me of Horatia and Lady Hamilton, the former of whom he described as a 'white little slip of a thing.' . . . . After Nelson's death all his sea-going belongings were sent to Bradenham; a piece of mahogany furniture from his cabin still stands in one of the bedrooms." *

In the spring of 1804 Nelson and Emma's second child was born. It was again a girl, and before its arrival Nelson had written to the expectant mother, "Call him what you please; if a girl, Emma." So Emma the baby was named, but she only lived a very short time, disappearing so soon that she made no impress on the heart of her mother and her father never saw her. But the loss of this child probably quickened their feeling that it was impossible to leave Horatia any longer to alien care, that she must come under the Merton rooftree—though still she could not come as the acknowledged daughter of that house. So, to explain her presence there, Nelson wrote Lady Hamilton in the summer of 1804 a letter which was evidently intended for public perusal:

"I am now going to state a thing to you and

*A Farmer's Year.

to request your kind assistance, which, from my dear Emma's goodness of heart, I am sure of her acquiescence in. Before we left Italy I told you of the extraordinary circumstance of a child being left to my care and protection. On your first coming to England I presented you the child, dear Horatia. You became, to my comfort, attached to it, so did Sir William, thinking her the finest child he had ever seen. She is become of that age when it is necessary to remove her from a mere nurse and to think of educating her . . . I am now anxious for the child's being placed under your protecting wing."

Thus was the "Thompson" fiction changed to suit changed circumstances. Written on an enclosure for Emma's eye alone was the exclamation, "My beloved, how I feel for your situation and that of our dear Horatia, our dear child."

So soon as the plan of having Horatia at Merton was established, Nelson's loving and anxious mind, so feminine in some of its aspects, began to foresee and guard against dangers for the child. To her mother he wrote, "I also beg, as my dear Horatia is to be at Merton, that a strong netting, about three feet high, may be placed round the Nile, that the little thing may not tumble in; and, then, you may have ducks again in it. I forget, at what place we saw the netting; and either Mr. Perry or Mr. Goldsmith, told us where it was to be bought. I shall be very anxious until I know this is done." Again he writes,

"Only take care that my darling does not fall in, and get drowned. I begged you to get the little netting along the edge, and, particularly, on the bridges." He bought a gold watch through Falconet of Naples and sent it to Horatia, remembering how she had liked to listen to his own; he sent her books of Spanish dresses; but his indulgence stopped short at a dog, probably thinking there might be some danger to the child from such an animal: "I would not have Horatia think of a dog. I shall not bring her one; and, I am sure, she is better without a pet of that sort. But she is like her mother, would get all the old dogs in the place about her." His thoughts of his baby daughter are constant: "Everything you tell me about my dear Horatia charms me," he tells Lady Hamilton, "I think I see her, hear her, and admire her." In a letter to his niece, Charlotte Nelson, who was a constant inmate of Merton at this time, Nelson says he is "truly sensible" of her attachment to "that dear little orphan, Horatia." He bursts out with sudden passion, "Although her parents are lost, yet she is not without a fortune: and, I shall cherish her to the last moment of my life; and *curse* them who *curse* her, and Heaven *bless* them who *bless* her!"

After Horatia and her mother, Merton was Nelson's dearest interest, and he followed from his distant flagship every little improvement there, though he warned Emma Hamilton in a letter of

March, 1804, "We need be great economists, to make both ends meet, and carry on the little improvements." Emma never was a "great economist," and evidently Nelson was slightly alarmed at the expenses she was plunging into, for in the same letter he goes on: "I would not have you lay out more than is necessary, at Merton. The rooms, and the new entrance, will take a great deal of money. The entrance by the corner I would have certainly done; a common white gate will do for the present; and one of the cottages, which is in the barn, can be put up, as a temporary lodge. The road can be made to a temporary bridge; for that part of the Nile, one day, shall be filled up. Downing's canvas awning will do for a passage. For the winter, the carriage can be put in the barn; and, giving up Mr. Bennett's premises, will save fifty pounds a year: and, another year, we can fit up the coach-house and stables, which are in the barn. The foot-path should be turned. I did show Mr. Haslewood the way I wished it done."

Then, perhaps, fearing Emma would not appreciate these unaccustomed economies, he adds: "Your good, angelic heart, my dearest beloved Emma, will fully agree with me, everything is very expensive; and, even we find it, and will be obliged to economise, if we assist our friends: and, I am sure, we shall feel more comfort in it than in loaded tables, and entertaining a set of people who care not for us." He assures her,

"All my hopes are, to see you, and be happy, at dear Merton, again."

And all this while that he was so tender and thoughtful for his loved ones at home, Nelson was struggling with his own ailments and disappointments at sea. He was sick—as he reminded Emma, he was never well when it blew, and yet he was enduring summer and winter gales without respite—his one eye pained him, he was neuralgic, his side was swelled, he felt the blood gushing up one side of his head. It seemed that he had every imaginable minor physical misery, as well as separation, to bear. To his brother-in-law, George Matcham, he wrote: "Although I have not been ill, yet the constant anxiety I have experienced has shook my weak frame, and my rings will hardly keep upon my finger; and what grieves me more than all is that I can every month perceive a visible (if I may be allowed the expression) loss of sight; a few years must, as I have always predicted, render me blind. I have often heard that Blind people are cheerful, but I think I shall take it to heart." But in spite of these griefs his characteristic spirit shines in one of his letters of this time to Emma: "Government have reposed great confidence in me, and I hope my conduct will meet their approbation; but, my dear friend, after all, this almost boasting—what is man? a child of the day,—and you will scarcely credit, after all I have wrote, that the Medical gentlemen are wanting to survey me, and to send me to

Bristol for the re-establishment of my health; but, whatever happens, I have run a glorious race."

When the Lord Mayor of London conveyed to him the thanks of the Corporation for his services in "blockading" Toulon, Nelson answered, "I beg to inform your lordship that the port of Toulon has never been blockaded by me—quite the reverse—every opportunity has been offered the enemy to put to sea, for it is there that we hope to realise the hopes and expectations of our country, and I trust that they will not be disappointed."

"This is an odd war," Nelson exclaimed during this long waiting, "not a battle!"

But in January, 1805, the waiting came to an end—the French fleet at last put to sea, and Nelson, "in a fever," went to Egypt after them and missed them; he returned disconsolate to find they had put back into Toulon, much battered by storms after all their harbour-keeping. And then the Toulon fleet broke out again and made for the West Indies, with Nelson following after. His one cry was, "God send I may find them!" but there he failed, though his long, close chase made it impossible for Villeneuve to do anything save fly. Jamaica was saved, the sugar ships were saved, and, driven like sheep by England's Admiral, the French fleet fled back to Europe, where they were met by Sir Robert Calder off Cape Finisterre. After a partial fleet action, Villeneuve put into Vigo, and from there retreated to Cadiz. Nelson's

LORD VISCOUNT NELSON.

From an Aquatint by Thomas Tegg, 1807.

vigilance, though it had not won the battle he was thirsting for, had quite upset Napoleon's sea-plans and dislocated his huge combinations. Once more the dread threat of invasion had come to naught because of those "far-distant, storm-beaten ships" of Nelson's. At last, after his long vigil, his long sacrifice of his dearest pleasures, Nelson was free to return to "dear England, and a thousand times dearer Merton." Nearly a year before his return, on the last birthday but one he was to know, he had written to Emma, "Forty-six years of toil and trouble! How few more, the common lot of mankind leads us to expect; and, therefore, it is almost time to think of spending the few last years in peace and quietness."

The "few last years" were nearer than he thought, the "peace and quietness" were to narrow themselves down to a scanty month when Nelson came home to Merton for the last time in August, 1805.

CHAPTER XIII: THE LAST LANDFALL.

IT was "just two years and three months," as Nelson himself said, since he had seen Portsmouth and set foot upon the Hard that welcomes the returning sailor. He was the greatest sailor who had ever set forth from or returned to Portsmouth, and the people knew it even in his lifetime. When the *Victory's* flag was seen, crowds flocked to behold him, and as his barge pulled to the shore he was saluted with continued cheering and huzzas. There is no evidence that Nelson was attached to Portsmouth; smaller, and red-roofed as it would appear to have been then, enclosed by ramparts and drawbridges, it was not an attractive town. Certainly it had nothing to offer to detain the Admiral; he would not even stay the night there, late as his flag was hauled down, but set off immediately along the Portsmouth Road for Merton, the goal of all his hopes. As he had left Merton in the early hours of the morning, so in the early hours he returned again—his postchaise and smoking horses arriving at the Merton gateway in the morning of August 20th.

There he found the welcome of his heart from Emma Hamilton and the little stout and dark-eyed

child Horatia. There also he found many members of his family assembled to greet him, and more on their way, travelling from east and west to the magnet of his presence. He was the most famous and the most adored man in England, though he had failed to meet the French. "Oh! say how he looks, and talks, and eats, and sleeps," cries one of Lady Hamilton's feminine correspondents at this time, "Never was there a man come back so enthusiastically revered. Look at the ideas that pervade the mind of his fellow-citizens in this morning's post. Timid spinsters and widows are terrified at his foot being on shore"—for fear, that is, lest Buonaparte should take the happy opportunity to cross the "ruffled strip of salt."

On this very day of his return to Merton he was visited by a Danish gentleman, who describes Nelson as appearing "with flowing locks and in full uniform." He continues: "On the 20th of August 1805, I enjoyed the honour of an interview with the gallant Admiral. In the balcony I observed a number of ladies who I understood to be Lord Nelson's relations; entering the house, I passed through a lobby, which, among a variety of paintings and other works of art, contained a marble bust of the illustrious Admiral. Here I met the Rev. Dr. Nelson . . . and was ushered into a magnificent apartment. Chairs having been provided, the Admiral sat down between Lady Hamilton and myself, and having laid my account of the battle of Copenhagen on his knee an interesting

conversation ensued. His Lordship then conducted me upstairs and showed me a print of our Crown Prince, and of the battle of Copenhagen. Lord Nelson was of middle stature, a thin body, and apparently of delicate constitution. The lines of his face were hard, but the penetration of his eye threw a kind of light upon his countenance which tempered its severity. His aspect commanded the utmost veneration, especially when he looked upwards."

Naturally at this time of crisis, when the French at sea were not beaten, only baffled, Nelson had to spend some of his precious leisure in London considering naval affairs with his Majesty's ministers. He complained, "I am now set up for a *Conjuror*, and God knows they will very soon find out I am far from being one, I was asked my opinion, against my inclination, for if I make one wrong guess the charm will be broken." But important as he knew himself to be to the country and the Navy, he could not bring himself to ask favours, even though it was so small a one as an appointment in the Customs for his brother-in-law, Mr. Bolton: "Although I have seen Mr. Pitt," he wrote to George Rose, "yet at a time when he is pleased to think that my services may be wanted, I could not bring my mouth to ask a favour, therefore I beg it may pass *through you*." Regarding an earlier request than this, Mr. Rose replied, "I repeated to Mr. Pitt *all* you said to me. He is *deeply sensible* of your zeal, goodness,

and confidence in him. He talked of riding over to Merton to thank you."

Nelson's old friend, Prince William Henry, Duke of Clarence, had already been over to Merton and dined there. Another acquaintance, William Beckford, of Fonthill, had written requesting the honour of a visit in Wiltshire, and to him Nelson replied: "Nothing could give me more pleasure than paying my respects at Fonthill, but I cannot move at present, as all my family are with me, and my stay is very uncertain; and, besides, I have refused for the present all invitations." So his friends had to go and see him. "I went to Merton on Saturday," wrote Lord Minto, "and found Nelson just sitting down to dinner, surrounded by a family party, of his brother the Dean, Mrs. Nelson, their children, and the children of a sister. Lady Hamilton at the head of the table, and Mother Cadogan at the bottom. I had a hearty welcome. He looks remarkably well and full of spirits. His conversation is a cordial in these low times. Lady Hamilton has improved and added to the house extremely well, without his knowing she was about it. He found it already done. She is a clever being, after all: the passion is as hot as ever." No wonder that Merton was too dear to be left needlessly, especially when it was graced by the presence of his favourite sister Catherine, with her husband George Matcham and her son, by his other sister Susanna Bolton with her husband and two daughters, Ann and

Eliza, by Dr. Nelson with his wife and children, Horace and Charlotte. Such a family gathering of sisters and brothers and nephews and nieces delighted the generous heart of Nelson. He called his nephews his "props," and certainly designed that the eldest son of his brother William, who was next heir to his title, should marry the little Horatia whose future was a considerable anxiety to him, in case of his own death.

The idea that his life would not be long seems to have been with him during these last weeks of home peace before Trafalgar. One day, when he and his sister Catherine ran across one another in London, where she was up probably for a day's shopping—for Merton was only one hour's drive from Hyde Park—and he engaged on more serious matters, she remarked anxiously on his look of weariness and depression. "Ah! Katty, Katty, that Gipsy," he said forebodingly—a gipsy had on one occasion told his fortune, and at the year of 1805 stopped short, declaring, "I can see no further."

Not only in his own feelings, but in the peculiarly marked expressions of tenderness and veneration that the common people showed him during this short stay in England may be felt some foreboding that dimly guessed at Trafalgar. For long that worn and indomitable figure had stood like an unsheathed sword between the people of England and their relentless foe—in his single name and person he had become the symbol of their

dumb defiance and courage and endurance under the weight of war. He had won victories in far seas, he had guarded their very coasts; he was known as lovable as brave. No man's heart but thrilled to his name, no woman's but softened to his weakness and his sufferings, so visible in his face. "Times of much doing are times of much suffering," as Fuller knew. Therefore the people followed him and blessed him before he came to die. "Lord Nelson arrived a few days ago," wrote Radstock. "He was received in town almost as a conqueror, and was followed round by the people with huzzas. So much for a great and good name most nobly and deservedly acquired." His old friend Lord Minto said, "I met Nelson in a mob in Piccadilly, and got hold of his arm, so that I was mobbed too. It is really quite affecting to see the wonder and admiration, and love and respect of the whole world; and the genuine expression of all these sentiments at once, from gentle and simple, the moment he is seen. It is beyond anything represented in a play or in a poem of fame." And amongst all these people there was one quiet observer, who after Nelson's death, was to write to a friend, "Wasn't you sorry for Lord Nelson? I have followed him in fancy ever since I saw him walking in Pall Mall (I was prejudiced against him before), looking just as a Hero should look; and I have been very much cut about it indeed. He was the only pretence of a Great Man we had." Thus Charles Lamb,

whose name had never struck on Nelson's ear, and yet we like to think of the gentle Elia following the Hero in fancy and musing in his restricted days on the life so far removed from his own.

Lamb saw Nelson but that once in Pall Mall. Wellington, the great military hero of the time to come, also saw Nelson but once, though as he talked with him as well he has left a fuller record behind—a record which must be quoted as it reveals some of those curious contradictory qualities in Nelson which were at times so baffling to the Admiral's admirers. Thirty years after Nelson's death John Wilson Croker and the Duke were talking at Walmer of Nelson, and "some instances were mentioned of the egotism and vanity that derogated from his character":

"Why," said Wellington, "I am not surprised at such instances, for Lord Nelson was, in different circumstances, two quite different men, as I myself can vouch, though I only saw him once in my life, and for, perhaps, an hour. It was soon after I returned from India. I went to the Colonial Office in Downing Street, and there I was shown into the little waiting room on the right hand, where I found, also waiting to see the Secretary of State, a gentleman, whom, from his likeness to his pictures and the loss of an arm, I immediately recognised as Lord Nelson. He could not know who I was, but he entered at once into conversation with me, if I can call it conversation, for it was almost all on his side and all about

himself, and in, really, a style so vain and silly as to surprise and almost disgust me. I suppose something that I happened to say may have made him guess that I was *somebody*, and he went out of the room for a moment, I have no doubt to ask the office-keeper who I was, for when he came back he was altogether a different man, both in manner and matter. All that I had thought a charlatan style had vanished, and he talked of the state of this country and of the aspect and probabilities of affairs on the Continent with good sense, and a knowledge of subjects both at home and abroad, that surprised me equally and more agreeably than the first part of our interview had done; in fact, he talked like an officer and a statesman. The Secretary of State kept us long waiting, and certainly, for the last half or three-quarters of an hour, I don't know that I ever had a conversation that interested me more. Now, if the Secretary of State had been punctual, and admitted Lord Nelson in the first quarter of an hour, I should have had the same impression of a light and trivial character that other people have had; but luckily I saw enough to be satisfied that he was really a very superior man."

Wellington was peculiarly unfitted by temperament to understand the volatile, passionate, and childish qualities in Nelson's nature—that ingenuous boasting which at times he displayed and which was an endearing trait to those who loved him, could meet with no response from he who was

to be known so fittingly in later years as the Iron Duke. Wellington's somewhat grudging tribute to the Admiral's statesmanship is borne out by Pitt, who said that Nelson was as great a statesman as he was a warrior. The intercourse between Pitt and Nelson during these last few weeks, when both were within such measurable distance of their deaths, was closer than it had ever been. Nelson was both touched and flattered by Pitt's consideration, who, he said, was kind and cordial to him in the greatest degree and gave him as full honour as though he had caught and beaten the French fleet. On one of these visits to the Prime Minister he was particularly pleased because Pitt paid him the compliment of attending him to the door. In one of his letters Nelson quotes some of his own remarks to Pitt: "I told him I had not been bred in courts, and could not pretend to a nice discrimination between the use and abuse of parties, and, therefore, I must not be expected to range myself under the political banners of any man, in place or out of place: that England's welfare was the object of my pursuit; and where the tendency of any measure to promote or defeat that object seemed clear, I should vote accordingly, without regard to other circumstances: that in matters where my judgment wavered, or to the full scope of which I might feel unequal, I should be silent; as I could not reconcile to my mind giving a vote without full conviction of its propriety." In answer to this

Pitt said he wished every officer held the same sentiments.

Nelson's friend, George Rose, at this time much wished he would sit for his portrait to an artist named Edridge, "who has taken a most remarkably strong likeness of Mr. Pitt, in small whole-length. I should delight in having such a one of your Lordship." But there was to be no leisure in these hurried days for such sittings, though one little sketch of his head was taken at Merton by John Whichelo—a beautiful and illuminating sketch, left profile, like the earlier one of De Koster's, and having about it just that touch of idealising grace which befits the last portrait taken of the hero as a living man. About it, about the deep-set eye and the firm but drooping mouth, there is a noble sadness of look, a consciousness of the burden of a great destiny. In his expression is patience and solemnity, all fretfulness and excitability have departed. Here is Nelson in the last hours of his life, bearing in every line of his face the record of what he had endured for England, of a heart that grieved, but a courage that was steadfast through all.

Very soon the call of his country, which Nelson was expecting, came to him. At five o'clock on the morning of September 2nd, Captain Blackwood—who had just arrived with the news that the Combined Fleets had put into Cadiz—came to Merton. He found the Admiral, who was an early riser when in good health, already up and

dressed, with some prescience, as it might seem, of the tidings. "I am sure you bring me news of the French and Spanish Fleets," he said to Blackwood, "and I think I shall yet have to beat them." He followed Captain Blackwood to London, where at the Admiralty Lord Barham, the First Lord, told him to choose the officers he would like to have under his command. "Choose them yourself," said Nelson; "the same spirit animates the whole Navy, you cannot go wrong." A very triumphant statement, for it was his own spirit that animated the Navy, his spirit that he had instilled into all the officers and men who came within the magic of his influence.

Harrison, who was inspired by Lady Hamilton's eloquent and not always accurate imagination, gives what he calls a "true history" of Nelson's manner of offering his services at this crisis. When Captain Blackwood arrived with his news Nelson showed no inclination to move from his home. "Let the man trudge it who has lost his budget," he remarked with apparent gaiety. But as he was pacing one of the garden walks at Merton, always called by him the Quarter-deck, Lady Hamilton came to him and said that she perceived he was uneasy. "No!" said Nelson; "I am as happy as possible." Adding that "he saw himself surrounded by his family; that he found his health better since he had been at Merton; and, that he would not give a sixpence to call the King his uncle." Emma, however, declared that she

did not believe him and knew he was dying to get at the French and Spanish Fleets, which were the price and reward of his long watching, adding, "Nelson, however we may lament your absence, and your so speedily leaving us, offer your services, immediately, to go off Cadiz; they will be accepted, and you will gain a quiet heart by it. You will have a glorious Victory, and, then, you may come here and be happy." Then, on Harrison's authority, Nelson answered with tears in his eyes, "Brave Emma! good Emma! if there were more Emmas, there would be more Nelsons; you have penetrated my thoughts. I wish all you say, but was afraid to trust even myself with reflecting on the subject."

That Nelson needed a woman's word to urge him to his duty is a thing we never can believe, though he may have found encouragement in it, and would certainly praise Emma handsomely for any courage she displayed. But instead of shrinking from his duty, Nelson's attitude is finely shown in his letter to Davison at this time: "I will do my best, and I hope God Almighty will go with me. I have much to lose and little to gain: and I go because it is right, and will serve my country faithfully."

We see Emma Hamilton less as heroine (a part she always coveted) and more as woman in her letter to Lady Bolton, the Admiral's niece, "I am again broken-hearted, as our dear Nelson is immediately going. It seems as though I have

had a fortnight's dream, and am awoke to all the misery of this cruel separation. But what can I do? His powerful arm is of so much consequence to his Country."

Instantly the peace of Merton was turned into the restlessness of preparation. "*All my things* are this day going off for Portsmouth," wrote Nelson on September 5th, only three days after Captain Blackwood's arrival with the fateful news. Busy and crowded were those days and the few that followed them before Nelson started on his last English journey. He had many preparations and arrangements to make, he had old friends to see and say farewell to. One of these old friends was Lord Sidmouth, on whom in August Nelson had called; "Surprised me," said Sidmouth, "without a coat, having just undergone the operation of bleeding. He looked well, and we passed an hour together." On the eve of Nelson's departure Lord Sidmouth wrote to say that he would call to see him at Merton if he could not take Richmond Park on his way to town. As Sidmouth had been ill, Nelson wrote on September 8th, "On Tuesday forenoon, if superior powers do not prevent me, I will be in Richmond Park, and shall be glad to take you by the hand, and to wish you a most perfect restoration to health." "Lord Nelson came on that day," wrote Sidmouth, "and passed some hours at Richmond Park. This was our last meeting." During this visit Nelson explained to his host how he proposed to attack the Combined

Fleets, should he meet them, drawing a plan with his finger "on the little study table." "Rodney broke the line in one point," said Nelson, "I will break it in two."

Thus, five weeks before his death, he set forth what he was actually to achieve. The idea and the foreboding of death was certainly very present to him at this time, though it made no faintest difference to his actions. After the battle of the Nile Captain Hallowell had made him the strange present of a coffin formed from the wood of the French flagship *L'Orient*, to remind him, said the bluff captain, that in spite of his glory he was mortal. Just before he left London he called at his upholsterer's, Mr. Peddieson, in Brewer Street, where the coffin was kept, and desired him to take a special care of it, for, he said, "I think it highly probable that I may want it on my return."

Another farewell visit was to his friend Sir William Beechey, who had painted his portrait, and to whose child he stood godfather. Before leaving Sir William Beechey's house in Harley Street, the Admiral asked what he should give as a remembrance to his baby godson. "Give him the hat you wore at the Battle of the Nile," said the painter, and so the famous hat, with two bullet holes in it, was given to the fortunate child.

Sir William Beechey's admiration for the Hero of the Nile dated back some years, for Lady Nelson writing to her husband in the spring of 1800, before the breach between them, had said: "I

think you will be surprised when I tell you our good father is sitting for his portrait. Sir W. Beechey is the fortunate man. You must know it is a profound secret. I went to Sir W. to ask his price, look at his pictures, and then inquire whether he would go to an invalid. The answer, 'No,' puzzled me; however, I said, 'Sometimes general rules were broken through.' Sir William, finding I was rather anxious about this picture, said that really he never went to any person excepting the King and Royal Family. The Duke and Duchess of York had that instant left the house. I knew that. 'But, madam, may I ask who is the gentleman?' 'Yes, sir; my Lord Nelson's father.' 'My God, I would go to York to do it! Yes, madam, directly.' He was as good as his word, and has been here twice. I think the likeness will be an exceeding good one."

About the time of his last visit to Beechey, a dinner was given in Nelson's honour at which West, the painter of the "Death of Wolfe" was present. The story is told that the Admiral regretted his art education had been so neglected. "But," he said, turning to West, "there is one picture whose power I do feel. I never pass a paintshop where your 'Death of Wolfe' is in the window, without being stopped by it." He asked West why he painted no more pictures like that? "Because there are no more subjects," answered the artist. "Damn it," exclaimed Nelson, "I didn't think

of that," and he asked West to take a glass of champagne with him. "But, my Lord," continued the painter, "I fear your intrepidity will yet furnish me with such another scene, and if it should, I shall certainly avail myself of it." "Will you? Will you?" Nelson cried, pouring out the bumpers and striking his glass against West's, "then I hope I shall die in the next battle!"

Nelson could little have thought when he made that excitable remark how very rapidly and completely his hope would be fulfilled. All the preparations were done and his departure fixed. The day before Lord Minto took leave of him. "I went yesterday to Merton," he wrote on September 13th, "in a great hurry, as Lord Nelson said he was to be at home all day, and he dines at half-past three. But I found he had been sent for to Carleton House, and he and Lady Hamilton did not return till half-past five." To make up for this loss of two hours of the Admiral's company Minto "stayed till ten at night, and I took a final leave of him. He goes to Portsmouth to-night. Lady Hamilton was in tears all day yesterday, could not eat, and hardly drink, and near swooning, and all at table." Which was hardly living up to her heroine attitude, and must have made it still more heartrending for Nelson to say his last farewell to her, to Horatia, to Merton. But on the evening of Friday, the 13th of September, he took his last look at his little daughter as she lay asleep,

kneeling down at the cot's side to pray for her; his last embrace of Emma and his sister Catherine, and attended to the gate by George Matcham, at half-past ten stepped into the postchaise which relentlessly waited for him. Darkness would rob him of any final impression of Merton, save of a softly lighted window or two gleaming before his blurred eyes. Grief he had left behind him, grief he carried with him. "Friday night, at half-past ten, drove from dear, dear Merton," he wrote in his private diary, "where I left all that I hold dear in this world, to go to serve my King and country. May the great God whom I adore enable me to fulfill the expectations of my country, and if it is His good pleasure that I should return, my thanks will never cease being offered up to the throne of His mercy."

Brave and piteous words!—so brave in act, so piteous in hope.

All through the night he drove, through Guildford and over Hindhead on his way to Portsmouth. At Liphook, at the Anchor Inn, he snatched a hasty breakfast, and in his hurry left a sextant behind him. In the early morning of the 14th he reached Portsmouth and went for an hour or two's rest to the George Inn. There he wrote his last letter to Emma Hamilton on English soil—the final letters were written at sea. This is the letter: "My dearest and most beloved of women, Nelson's Emma,—I arrived here this moment and Mr. Lancaster takes it. His coach is at the door and

BACK EXIT OF THE "GEORGE" HOTEL, PORTSMOUTH.

only waits for my line. Victory is at St. Helens, and, if possible, shall be at sea this day. God protect you and my dear Horatia prays ever your most faithful Nelson and Bronte."

So soon as it was known that he had arrived crowds gathered to say "Hail and farewell." To escape these crowds Nelson left the George by the little narrow stone-flagged back entrance, that leads into Penny Street, and instead of embarking at the usual Sally-Port, made towards the bathing machines on Southsea beach. But the people found him and followed him—they would not be denied. They struggled to touch him, to shake his hand. "I wish I had two hands, then I could accommodate more of you," said Nelson as they pressed round him. In Southey's classic words: "Many were in tears, and many knelt before him, and blessed him as he passed. England has had many heroes, but never one who so entirely possessed the love of his fellow-countrymen as Nelson. . . . They pressed upon the parapet to gaze after him when his barge pushed off, and he was returning their cheers by waving his hat . . . the people would not be debarred from gazing, till the last moment, upon the hero, the darling hero of England."

"I had their huzzas before," said Nelson to Captain Hardy, who was with him, "I have their hearts now."

. . . . . .

Little over a month later Nelson had won the

battle of Trafalgar and died in the very hour of victory. That spirit "fraught with fire unquenchable" was still and silent, though his name and fame shone with undying glory. The last scene in the *Victory's* dark cockpit was a strange pathetic mingling of the great ideals which had lighted all his life—Duty, his Country, patriotism of the noblest kind, self-sacrifice, suffering, courage; of those things and of the little homely tender things which lay so close to his craving, only half-satisfied heart. He ached to know how many of the enemy's ships had been taken, he remembered to request that Lady Hamilton was to have his hair and all other things belonging to him. Confidently he left her and "my Daughter Horatia as a legacy to my Country": he was dying for England, he could not think that England would refuse that legacy. When the surgeon told him his injuries were past aid, Nelson said, "I know it. I feel something rising in my breast which tells me I am gone."

CHAPTER XIV: ENGLAND'S GRIEF AND GLORY.

FOR fifteen days after the victory of Trafalgar and the death of Nelson, England remained ignorant both of her glory and of her grief. For that space of time the small portion of the nation which was nearest him, his sailors at sea, mourned Nelson alone. The noble words of Collingwood's grief are well known, but amid all the solemn and touching tributes his death was to call forth, we get perhaps our most vivid glimpse of the love his seamen bore him in the artless remarks of an unlettered sailor who had been through the action in the *Royal Sovereign*. "Our dear Admiral Nelson is killed!" he wrote, with the blood and sweat of battle still upon him, "so we have paid pretty sharply for licking 'em. I never sat eyes on him, for which I am both sorry and glad; for, to be sure, I should like to have seen him—but then, all the men in our ship who have seen him are such soft toads, they have done nothing but blast their eyes, and cry, ever since he was killed. God bless you! chaps that fought like the devil, sit down and cry like a wench."

The hard tears of those rough seamen were a finer tribute than any kings and princes could offer Nelson.

The *Pickle* schooner reached England with the news of his death—beside which the battle-triumph seemed to sink into insignificance—on the 5th of November. Each outward coach from Portsmouth bore the news, with its mingling of cypress and bay. Early the following morning a "Gazette Extraordinary" announced the nation's loss and gain. All English eyes and hearts turned seaward to the shot-battered *Victory*, jury-rigged, returning homewards with the body of the dead hero. At first Collingwood had intended to send it home in the frigate *Euryalus*, but the whole crew of the flagship remonstrated; they sent a boatswain's mate as their spokesman, and he said: "The noble Admiral had fought with them, and fell on their own deck. If, by being put on board a frigate, his remains should fall into the hands of the enemy, their loss would be doubly grievous: and therefore they were resolved, one and all, to carry it in safety to England, or to go to the bottom with their sacred charge."

The same spirit is manifest in a letter from a Marine of the *Victory* which survives. "They have behaved well to us," he says, "for they wanted to take Lord Nelson from us, but we told Captain as we brought him out we would bring him home; so it was so, and he was put into a cask of spirits."

This same Marine's account of Nelson and his last dying words is instinct with a quality of its own, for which we look in vain in more learned historians: "I shall just give you a description of Lord Nelson. He is a man about five feet seven, very slender, of an affable temper; but a rare man for his country, and has been in 123 actions and skrimmages, and got wounded with a small ball, but it was mortal. It was his last words, that it was his lot for me to go, but I am going to heaven, but never haul down your colours to France, for your men will stick to you."

The *Pickle* schooner reached Spithead with the news of Nelson's death on November 5th; the *Victory* with his body on board did not reach St. Helen's till the 4th of December, and immediately every ship in the Roads lowered their flags and pendants to half-mast. From St. Helen's the sad *Victory* sailed up Channel to the Nore. Owing to contrary winds she had difficulty in getting round the South Foreland, and as a gale sprang up had to anchor for three days in the Downs, which had been so familiar to the living hero. While the *Victory* was anchored there, Captain Hardy and some of the officers landed and went to the house, of a Mr. Petman. His daughter, a girl of seventeen at the time, used in later years to relate how the *Victory's* officers came to her father's house and how she felt "almost terrified to see these rather rough and bearded men talking of their departed Chief with tears running down

their weather-beaten faces as they told of his death and how they loved him." *

When the *Victory* reached the Nore, that coffin made from the *Orient's* mainmast, which Nelson had prophetically said he would "probably want," was conveyed on board, and his body taken out of the spirits of wine and placed therein. Relics of him, anything that had been his or near him, were eagerly sought by the brave men who had fought and lived with him. The block of wood on which his head had rested while in its temporary coffin was made into small boxes and medal cases which were given to his officers. One of these cases has a little gold plate let into the lid inscribed "Nelson's Last Pillow." There was something in Nelson which brought out the tender side in even the roughest valour.

The following laconic record of the *Victory's* parting with her Admiral is copied from the actual Deck-Log kept at the time. The date is "Dec. 1805. Monday, 23."

"H.M.S. Victory Moored in the Swin. Wind Moderate breezes and cloudy at 1h. 40m. S.W. Shortened sail and anchored with the small bower anchor in 12 fms mud in the Swin. Veered and Moored, 1 Cable to the Westward, ½ Cable to the East. When Moored Black Tail Beacon bore NNE.—1½ miles. Came alongside Commissioner Grey's yacht from Sheerness and recd. the Remains

* I am indebted for this touching reminiscence to Mrs. Rideout, to whose mother Miss Petman was governess.

REMAINS OF LORD VISCOUNT NELSON LAYING IN STATE IN THE PAINTED CHAMBER AT GREENWICH HOSPITAL.

From an Aquatint by M. Merigot after a Drawing by C. A. Pugin.

of the Late Lord Viscount Nelson K.B.—Vice Admiral of the White.

"Got a Pilot on Board to take the Ship to Chatham."

Officially the *Victory* had no emotion to waste on Nelson—it was only unofficially that her officers and ship's company gave way to manly tears.

About noon on the 24th of December the Admiralty yacht with the body on board, attended by Alexander Scott, Nelson's devoted secretary, and many officers and other people, arrived in the Thames off Greenwich Hospital. At five o'clock the same day Nelson's coffin was lowered into a boat, covered with the *Victory's* colours, and conveyed to the Hospital stairs, whence it was borne by a party of the *Victory's* seamen to the Painted Hall. There for over a week Alexander Scott watched by the coffin, day and night, sleepless through the dark December hours, so emaciated and afflicted with grief that many people were startled by his appearance. "Every thought and word I have is about your dear Nelson," he wrote to Lady Hamilton. "Here lies Bayard, but Bayard victorious. . . . So help me God, I think he was a true knight and worthy the age of chivalry."

On Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, from January 5th to 7th, 1806, Nelson's body lay in state in the Painted Hall. A contemporary chronicler thus records the arrangements: "A temporary wains-

coting, placed at some distance from the inside walls of this grand structure, formerly called King William's Building, was covered with black cloth from top to bottom, and hung all round with one row of lamps, having two candles in each, and the intervals between them appropriately emblazoned with escutcheons of his Lordship's armorial bearings. In the centre of the hall a boarded partition, five feet high, was erected lengthwise, covered with black cloth, hung with lamps, and decorated on each side like the wainscoting. This divided the space into two equal parts, and formed avenues of ten feet wide, one to conduct to the coffin, and the other leading from it, with the utmost convenience. This partition terminated at the upper end, within about seven or eight feet of the rails, inclosing, in a semi-circular form, the coffin of the illustrious Hero, which was laid with the feet towards the spectators. . . . The pall was folded up to the head of the coffin, so that the richness and splendour of the latter were displayed to the utmost advantage. A Viscount's Coronet lay on the head of the coffin, and other State ornaments on a cushion stool at the feet. The arms were affixed to the black drapery at the head, surmounted with a crescent, on one side of which was the Lion of England, holding a sprig of laurel in his paw, while the British colours seemed to wave in triumph over his back. On the other side a sailor was represented in a sorrowful attitude, holding a flag in one hand and a laurel in the other.

REMAINS OF LORD VISCOUNT NELSON LAYING IN STATE IN THE PAINTED CHAMBER AT GREENWICH HOSPITAL.

From an Aquatint by M. Merigot after a Drawing by C. A. Pugin.

. . . This part within the railing was hung with a double row of lamps, and decorated both with escutcheons and stars. From the arched way at its entrance, a festooned curtain of black cloth, with black fringe, was let down about half way, which heightened the solemn dignity of the whole scene. There was also a range of lamps placed along the crescent, at some distance from the foot of the coffin."

To this night of mourning lit by stars of pride the people for whom Nelson had died came in thousands to pay him their last homage. So passionately they came that a strong guard of the Royal Greenwich Volunteers and officers of the *Victory*, armed with boarding pikes, had to protect them from themselves. Beggars came in their rags and cripples on crutches, as well as the highest in the land, for in the words of a contemporary writer, "It might with truth be asserted that the bosom of every Briton was a tomb in which the memory of their favourite hero was embalmed." There is the ring of truth even in the somewhat heavy words of the "Annual Register": "When the tidings of the glorious Victory off Trafalgar, with all the train of blessings which it brought with it, reached England, and that it was known that they were purchased with the life of her Hero, not an individual in the Country . . . who would not have given up the Victory to have saved the Victim."

When the splendid and tragic news arrived

the Royal Family were moved to tears, and Lord Malmesbury gives an account of Pitt's emotions: "I shall never forget the eloquent manner in which he described his conflicting feelings when roused in the night to read Collingwood's despatches. Pitt observed that he had been called up at various hours in his eventful life by the arrival of news of various hues, but that, whether good or bad, he could always lay his head on his pillow and sink into a sound sleep again. On this occasion, however, the great event announced brought with it so much to weep over, as well as to rejoice at, that he could not calm his thoughts, but at length got up, though it was three in the morning."

In his "Diary" Lord Malmesbury continues his picture of that time: "Could he have lived but long enough to have known, that no victory —not even his victories, could weigh in the hearts of Englishmen against his most precious life, it would have been some consolation. I never saw so little public joy. The illumination seemed dim, and, as it were, half-clouded by the desire of expressing the mixture of contending feelings; every common person in the streets speaking first of their sorrow for him, and then of the victory."

The nation decreed to Nelson a magnificent burial in St. Paul's. He is said, on the authority of Dr. Beatty, to have told Captain Hardy that in case of his death, which he expected, and a public funeral, he would rather be buried at St. Paul's than Westminster Abbey, for he had heard "an

PANORAMA OF LORD NELSON'S FUNERAL PROCESSION.

From an Etching by George Cruikshank.

old tradition when he was a boy, that Westminster Abbey was built on a spot where once existed a deep morass, and he thought it likely that the lapse of time would reduce the ground on which it now stands to its primitive state of a swamp, without leaving a trace of the Abbey." If his Country should not bury him, "You know what to do with me," he said to Hardy, returning to his early wish to lie where he was born. In his Will of two years earlier Nelson had written, "If I die in England, my body to be buried in the Parish Church of Burnham Thorpe near the remains of my deceased father and mother, and in as private a manner as may be." In the same Will he bequeathed a hundred pounds to the poor of Burnham Thorpe, Sutton, and Norton. The year after that Will and one year before his death he had written the touching letter * in which he says, "Most probably I shall never see dear, dear Burnham again; but I have a satisfaction in thinking that my bones will probably be laid with my Father's in the village that gave me birth."

But green and peaceful Burnham Thorpe was not to have his bones: England claimed them.

On the 8th of January Nelson was taken by water to Whitehall Stairs. The Barge which bore his body was covered with black velvet, and in the stern over the coffin was a canopy adorned with funereal plumes. The Thames was

* Reproduced in facsimile in this volume.

Victory May 14th 1804

Dear Sir

I was by the Leviathan favord
your letter of Jan.y 14th: The Superb was in
company with the fleet and the Gentle:
man has I hope fully executed his com.
:mission I therefore shall send him a
letter to the Captain of the agincourt which
Ship is immediatley going to England to
give him a passage and every accommo:
:dation in his power.

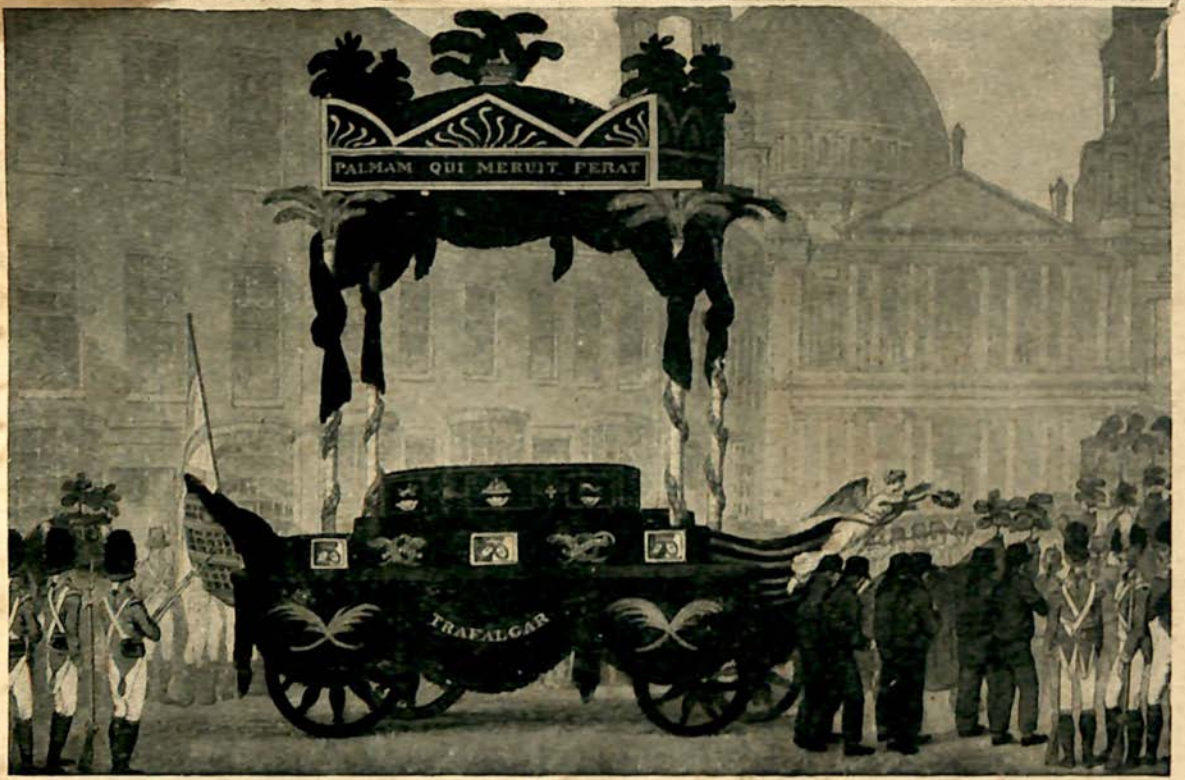
I remember you most
perfectly at Burnham and I shall never
forget the many little kindnesses I received
from your worthy Brother with whom
I was always a great favorite. most

Rear Dear Admt

probably I shall never see Dear dear Burnham
again but I have a satisfaction in thinking
that my bones will probably be laid with
my fathers in the Village that gave me
birth (totally different are my sentiments from
Lord Carnelfords on that and I hope almost
every other point) Pardon my Dear Sir this
digression but the thoughts of former days brings
all my mother into my heart which shews
itself in my eyes May heaven My
Dear Sir long preserve you in health
for the sake of your family & friends
and amongst the latter allow me to place
the name of your very faithful serv.t
Nelson Brontë

crowded with barges, the Lord Mayor's Barge and those of all the great City Companies taking part in the procession. From the banks an "innumerable multitude" looked on in deep silence, through which vibrated the dull booming of the minute guns. As the Tower was passed the great guns there were fired. Every imaginable activity on the river had ceased, all flags at half-mast, all the sea-faring population mourners. It was the same in the busy City, every shop was closed and all for that one day dedicated themselves to Nelson. A king's funeral could not have been more magnificent; no king's funeral could have been so full of loyalty and grief and love. As the body was being landed at the water-stairs in Palace Yard the sun disappeared and from heavy clouds came a tremendous hail-storm. Under a canopy supported by six Admirals Nelson's body was borne down Whitehall and into the familiar portals of the Admiralty—for the last time. Unknown he had trod there, beseeching employment, even in a "cockle-boat"; now he came there the greatest, the most beloved hero of his country. He was carried into that room on the left of the great hall, called the Captains' Room, which was hung in black, lighted with forty-six wax lights, while on either side of the coffin stood six tall candles. There all night his chaplain and private secretary, the faithful Alexander Scott, kept watch.

On the morrow, long before it was light in that dark January, the streets were filled with people



THE FUNERAL PROCESSION OF LORD VISCOUNT NELSON, JANUARY 9TH, 1806.

From an Aquatint by J. Godby after the Drawing by W. M. Craig.

who were ready to endure both darkness and cold so that they might have one glimpse of the hero's funeral. At twelve o'clock the immense procession set out from the Admiralty. The public were able to gaze upon almost the whole of the Peerage, upon the Royal Dukes of Cambridge, Sussex, Cumberland, Kent, Clarence, and York, upon the Prince of Wales, upon Rouge Croix and Rouge Dragon, upon Admirals and Captains and Greenwich Pensioners, and all the representatives of her national life that England could call together, before at last the Funeral Car of Nelson came in sight. Great and towering was this car, carved at the head and stern to represent the *Victory*; above the coffin was a canopy like the covering of a sarcophagus, supported by four columns in the shape of palm-trees, wreathed with laurel and cypress. This great structure, with its additions of sable plumes and emblems, was drawn by six led horses.

The most noteworthy naval people in the procession were the Chief Mourner, Nelson's old friend Sir Peter Parker, and Captain Thomas Hardy, bearing the Banner of Emblems. The most noteworthy absences from the funeral ceremonies in St. Paul's were the Viscountess Nelson and Lady Hamilton—neither the dead Admiral's widow in law or widow in love were present at the last scene of all.

The procession entered St. Paul's by the western door, and within the great Cathedral was all

draped in black and filled with a huge and silent multitude. The coffin was first placed in the Choir, and from there removed to a platform under the Dome in the centre of which was the grave in the Crypt below. As the service drew on the short January day darkened, and torches were lighted in the Choir and a great lanthorn in the Dome, which had been specially constructed for the occasion, was illumined with 130 lights. "The grand central light," says the chronicler, "contributed greatly to the splendour of a spectacle in which the burial of one of the first of warriors and heroes was graced by the appearance of all the princes of the blood, of many of the first nobility of the land, and of an unexampled number of the subjects of his Majesty in general."

No more memorable scene has ever been enacted in the St. Paul's of Wren than this burial of Nelson. The winter dark and sable trappings, the soaring Dome imperfectly illuminated even by the much-admired "lanthorn," the flickering torches, the silent breaths and suppressed sobs of a multitude, the great Psalms and Anthem and Magnificat, rising and echoing in the vast spaces, the boys' unearthly trebles sounding as though angels leaned down to sing comfort for human sorrow. And in the midst of all, circled by the encompassing thought of thousands, that coffin, so small in the immense Cathedral, which held the mortal remains of the Hero—the restless, anxious, passionate heart at last stilled from troubling, for as they sang

FUNERAL PROCESSION OF THE LATE LORD VISCOUNT NELSON TO ST. PAUL'S, LONDON, 9TH JANUARY 1806.

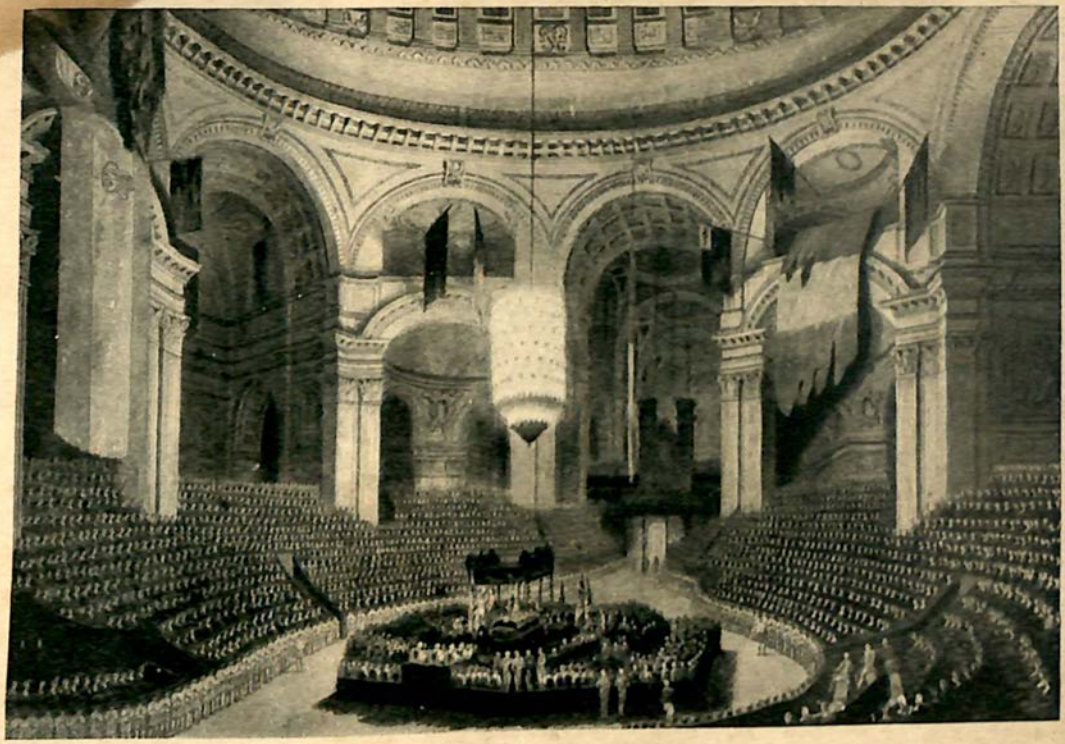
From an Aquatint by M. Merigot after a Drawing by C. A. Pugin.

above his grave, "Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live." Nelson's time of living had been short—but forty-seven years—yet in that space he had wrought so greatly that his name is undying. The most solemn moment of that solemn service was when the coffin was carried to the grave under the Dome and there lowered to its resting place below, while above it floated in benediction the words, "His body is buried in peace. But his name liveth evermore."

Then in sonorous syllables the Garter King at Arms proclaimed the style and titles of the deceased, adding after the long list, against all precedent, "and the Hero who, in the moment of Victory, fell covered with immortal glory!—Let us humbly trust, that he is now raised to bliss ineffable, and to a glorious immortality." He then threw into the grave the broken staves of the officers of Nelson's household, where also the shot-torn flags of the *Victory* were laid—all save one, which the dead Admiral's sailors who had carried the coffin into St. Paul's seized and tore into fragments, so that each might have some precious relic of the man they had loved and fought under.

And then the vast crowds poured out of St. Paul's Cathedral into the winter dark, at once uplifted and stricken, leaving Nelson alone in his tomb. Perhaps a woman's comment, that of Lady Londonderry, best expresses the most elevated feeling at the heart of that multitude: "He

now begins his immortal career, having nothing left to achieve upon earth, and bequeathing to the English fleet a legacy which they alone are able to improve. Had I been his wife, or his mother, I would rather have wept him dead, than seen him languish on a less splendid day. In such a death there is no sting, and in such a grave everlasting victory."



INTERMENT OF THE REMAINS OF THE LATE LORD VISCOUNT NELSON IN THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. PAUL'S, LONDON, JANUARY 9TH, 1806.

From an Aquatint by F. C. Lewis after the Drawing by C. A. Pugin.

CHAPTER XV: THE "NELSON TOUCH."

THAT little phrase of the "Nelson Touch," coined in a moment of inspiration by Nelson himself, has stood for a century and over as meaning so much more than its originator ever intended. According to his own account he used it in a purely tactical and professional sense—though the literal interpretation still leaves a sense of mystery as to its actual meaning. We, who were not there, wonder why, to those sea-worn officers, it was like "an electric shock," why some of them "shed tears." Would any tactical plan have that emotional effect? We are driven to believe that there was more than the literal meaning, that there was some pre-vision strangely seen in the phrase, the touch of conscious greatness which in the closing months of his life certainly came over Nelson. He had fully realised himself, and not only himself but his influence over other men—that influence which like a flame had gone through the fleet and made it a thing of terror to the foe. "My God," as the unhappy Villeneuve cried, "you are all Nelsons!"

Such was Nelson's influence living, such the magic of his impassioned and prevailing personality when he was there to enforce it by look and tone

and action. But the spell still works; he, being dead, yet speaketh. Generations that have never known him feel that he, above all heroes of our history, is a living man and no name. Through all the barriers of time and distance and silence, through his very apotheosis as hero which would remove him from the kindly contact of a working-day world—through all these obstacles Nelson has broken. By very strength of his weaknesses, his mistakes, his power of loving, his essential humanity, he appeals to us, as no classic and faultless hero can appeal. We love him because in his lifetime none knew better how to love, not only one woman, but many men.

Surveying his life, though it is the great battles that make him famous, that rear him columns and bury him in St. Paul's, it is not the great battles that render him so supremely interesting, so intimate and near to us. In another sense than the magnificent naval one in which he used it Nelson might truly say, "My Motto shall be *Touch and Take.*" He has made a greater conquest over the hearts of the English people than he ever made over the beautiful ships of the enemy.

Nelson had another background than that of flame and battle. He who was so un-English in some aspects of his character, in his passion and petulance, his abandon and expressive misery, his general power of conveying what he felt instead of only feeling it—yet had at his heart

PAINTED HALL, GREENWICH, AND NELSON'S FUNERAL CAR.

From an Aquatint after Pugin and Rowlandson.

the most English, the most domestic love of home, the most domestic desire for wife and children, quiet honour and troops of friends: for all that goes under the name of Peace and is at eternal enmity with War. It seemed as though he were two men: the one the true son of his good and gentle father; the other the Man of Destiny on whom Genius had laid her awful hand. The struggle, the conflict of these two sides of his nature tore him at times in pieces and made the very pith of his suffering during his last two years at sea. But the English background must never be forgotten in any complete estimate of Nelson's character, though it has been so largely overshadowed by battle and the brilliant and restless days of Naples. Yet in spite of estates at Bronté in Sicily, in spite of the larger portion of his life spent in foreign waters and on foreign shores, to Nelson "home" was always England and no other place. The feeling for England in those years of the Great War must have been closer, more passionate than any we know now. England, that small and valiant Island, uninvaded, defiant behind her fringe of sea-foam; cherishing within her coasts such sweetness of cornland and pasture, of cowslip and honeysuckle and flowering hedgerows; where quiet sheep were guarded, where evening bells ringing across the fields summoned quiet people to sing old psalms and hear old words read out from the Bible. Upon that oasis of an idealised England Napoleon's threats broke in vain—and of the sea-

men at sea guarding this home peace none held it more nearly to their hearts than Nelson. He had been bred to it at its most peaceful, he loved it and remembered it in his last years. From quiet Burnham Thorpe he had gone out aflame with the thirst for glory and for fame—he had won them in overwhelming measure, and then all his thoughts and dreams turned back again to those simple joys which belong to simple men, the joys on which humanity is based.

But the curse of genius was on Nelson; for him there was no completion, no satisfaction. All his life he had gone seeking, seeking something in toil, in danger, in heroism, in sacrifice, in love, in war, and in peace—something that he never fully found. Unsatisfied he died, and therein lies the poignancy of his appeal. Nelson so lives to memory, the "Nelson Touch" is still so close, because he is no flawless legendary hero, but a suffering man who cries to us not that we wonder at him and admire, but that we give him love, which was ever the greatest need of his life. "There is but one Nelson," said St. Vincent, and in a naval sense he spake it. We know it true in a greater than naval meaning—not by his victories but by his nature we say, "There is but one Nelson."

THE END.

BRITANNIA CONSECRATING THE ASHES OF THE IMMORTAL NELSON.

From a Stipple Engraving by F. Sansom.

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